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THE PINE ISLAND POSTS, 1786-1794: A STUDY OF COMPETITION IN THE FUR TRADE

by

© JOHN STEWART NICKS

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

OF MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

SPRING, 1975

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled "The Pine Island Posts, 1786-1794: A Study of Competition in the Fur Trade" submitted by John Stewart Nicks in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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Date April 23, 1975

ABSTRACT

In the summer and fall of 1786, four rival fur trade companies established posts on Pine Island, a small island in the North Saskatchewan River about fifty miles northwest of the present city of North Battleford, Saskatchewan. The competition which ensued between the Hudson's Bay Company and three Canadian rivals was intense. Within two years, two of the Canadian concerns had been eliminated. For six more years Pine Island remained an important centre of fur trade rivalry between the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company. A study of its history provides an opportunity to examine the competitive practices of the traders and their significance within the broader framework of the history of the fur trade.

A second major theme of this thesis arises from the impact of the fur trade on the Indian populations occupying the Saskatchewan River basin. The Pine Island posts were the first to trade regularly with the Blood, Piegan and Sarcee Indians. Their establishment destroyed the middleman status of many Cree and Assiniboine trading Indians. As a consequence, there were far ranging shifts in the political and economic systems of most of

the Indians in the Saskatchewan drainage basin. Processes of geographical displacement and changes in Indian alliance systems and economic adaptations were accelerated by the competitive practices of the traders. As a result there ensued a period of greater fluidity in trading patterns, more frequent intertribal raiding activity and reduced security for the fur traders themselves.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is with deep gratitude that I would like to acknowledge the assistance I have received from many individuals in the preparation of this thesis.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis consists of an historical study of the fur trade posts which were located on Pine Island in the North Saskatchewan River from 1786 until 1794. At the beginning of the period there were four posts, representing the Hudson's Bay Company, the North West Company, the Montreal partnership of John Gregory and Normand Macleod, and the partnership of two experienced Nipigon traders, Alexander Shaw and Donald McKay. After two years only the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company remained on the island.

A study of the Pine Island posts provides an opportunity to examine two major problems in fur trade and Indian history respectively from the perspective of an important though transitory centre of the fur trade. The series of journals from Manchester House, the Hudson's Bay Company post on Pine Island, constitute an excellent source of information about events as seen through the eyes of men who participated in the day-by-day competition for trade and had direct contact with Indian

peoples[1].

Between 1786 and 1794 the relative economic positions of the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company were essentially reversed. An examination of the total reutrns of the two companies indicates that the superior position of the Hudson's Bay Company in 1786 when its returns were substantially greater than those of the North West Company had deteriorated by 1794 to the point that the North West Company consistently took out more than the Hudson's Bay Company[2]. The reasons for this shift in the fortunes of the two companies are complex, but the detailed study of a specific fur trade centre allows for an examination of factors that were operating at the daily operational level.

The period of operation of the Pine Island posts also encompasses a critical period in the history of Indian cultures in the northwestern plains. About this time there occurred dramatic shifts in the geographical distribution of populations and changes in cultural and economic systems which accompanied the movement of Indian peoples from the parkland and forests bordering the Saskatchewan valley out onto the plains. Associated with this was a breakdown in the pre-existing alliance struc-

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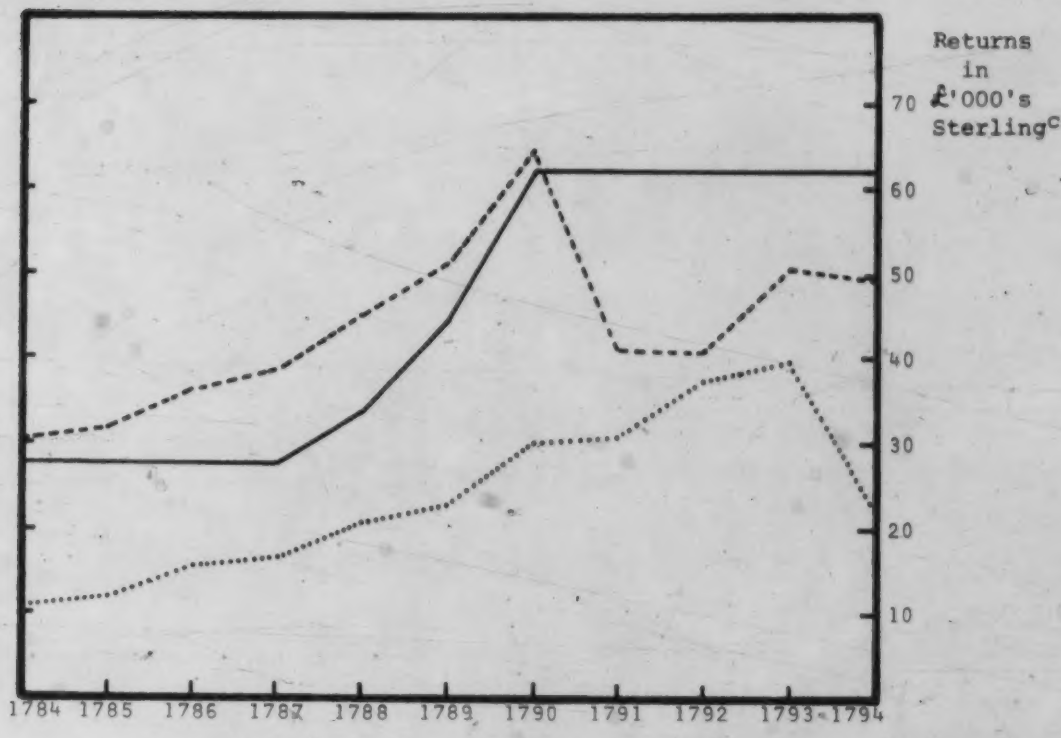
[1]Hudson's Bay Company Archives (H.B.A.), B121/a/1-8, Manchester House Journals, 1786-93.

[2]See Figure 1.

Figure 1:

GROSS RETURNS OF THE NORTH WEST COMPANY[a] AND THE HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY[b] 1784-1794



Legend: North West Company Returns for outfit year given ————————

Hudson's Bay Company Returns based on fur sales two years after year given ----------

Hudson's Bay Company Returns from York Factory based on fur sales two years after year given .....

[a]Based on Duncan McGillivray, "Some Account of the Trade Carried on by the North West Company," *Public Archives of Canada Report for the year 1928*, 69.

[b]Based on H.B.A., A15/13-15, Grand Journals.

[c]All North West Company returns have been converted from Halifax Currency using the valuation of £1.3.4 currency = £1 Sterling as given in E. E. Rich, *The History of the Husdon's Bay Company* (London, 1959) II, 119 n.1.

tures which led to major adjustments in aboriginal trading patterns and an intensification of warfare and raiding activity. These changes were reflected in the relationships between the traders and the Indians and dramatically demonstrated in 1793 by the sacking of Manchester House.

In considering the first of these two problems, the classic interpretation as developed by H. A. Innis[3] was that the critical factor in this period was that of organization and efficiency. Faced with the expansion of Canadian traders into the hinterland of their posts along the coast, the Hudson's Bay Company was slow to make the necessary adjustments in its policies because of "the rigidity of the organization which had been adapted to Hudson Bay."[4] Lack of efficiency was illustrated by the reputed lack of *esprit de corps*, disaffection stemming from an inadequate personnel policy, the continuation of clandestine trade and the accumulation of large stocks of damaged or poorly designed trade goods which were unacceptable to the Indians. Despite the advantage of a much cheaper transportation route, the Hudson's Bay Company was not able to compete on an equal footing with the superior organization, efficiency and verve of the Nor'westers.

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[3]H. A. Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada* (Toronto, 1964), 153-157.

[4]Ibid., 155.

To A. S. Morton[5] the answer appears to have lain in the fabric of history with its complex patterns of events. Both the Bay and the St. Lawrence had their advantages but the outcome of what he terms "The Great Struggle" was determined by events like the smallpox epidemic of 1781-1782 which sabotaged the Hudson's Bay Company's first attempt to expand their operations into the Athabasca country, or the capture of Fort Prince of Wales and York Factory by Lapérouse in 1782 which inflicted heavy losses on the Company and fatally damaged its position in the Saskatchewan and Churchill valleys. Morton also emphasized the detailed examination of the personalities, trading practices, relations with the Indians and other factors operating at the level of the individual fur trade post.

Richard Glover[6] recognized that the Hudson's Bay Company suffered from some serious flaws in their leadership in the field while emphasizing the disadvantages faced by it in obtaining a large and skilled pool of labour and establishing an efficient means of transport

---

[5]A. S. Morton, *A History of the Canadian West to 1870-71* (Toronto, 1973).

[6]Richard Glover, "The Difficulties of the Hudson's Bay Company's Penetration of the West," *Canadian Historical Review*, XXIX (September, 1948), 240-245; "Introduction" to E. E. Rich, editor, *Cumberland House Journals and Inland Journal 1775-82*, First Series 1775-79 (London, 1951); and "Introduction" to E. E. Rich, editor, *Cumberland House Journals and Inland Journals 1775-82*, Second Series, 1779-82 (London, 1952).

inland from the Bay. These latter disadvantages, he argued, were largely due to factors of geography and the exigencies of historical processes in Europe and Quebec. Glover has defended the quality of the Orkneymen who made up the main labour force of the Hudson's Bay Company and recognized the crucial impact of such events as those which were emphasized by Morton. Despite the inefficiencies inherent in the organization of the North West Company they benefited from the weaknesses of the Hudson's Bay Company, especially in times of war.

E. E. Rich[7] tended to emphasize the failure of the Hudson's Bay Company to mount an effective opposition to the North West Company in the Athabasca country. Placed in a disdavantageous position by the destruction of Fort Prince of Wales and the failure of the first attempt to enter that rich fur area in 1782 they proved unable to mobilize their resources in subsequent years because of rivalry between some of the officers at the Bay and the lack of a first-class directing mind willing to give top priority to the Athabasca country which was the main source of profits for the North West Company.

Many of the factors referred to above were essentially external to those which can be illustrated through the operations of a single post or settlement.

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[7]E. E. Rich, *The History of the Hudson's Bay Company 1670-1870* (London, 1959) II; and *The Fur Trade and the Northwest to 1857* (Toronto, 1967).

Accordingly, emphasis will be placed on the examination of the following: the impact of problems of transportation and manpower, weaknesses in organization and leadership, the quality and quantity of trade goods, competitive strategy and tactics and finally relations with the Indians. It is hoped that this will help to illustrate some of the factors which were tending to give to the Nor'Westers an ascendency in the fur trade of Canada.

The primary sources dealing with the posts on Pine Island also provide some insights into the history of Indian peoples who traded there. In order to assist in structuring observations based on the historical records, they have been considered within the framework of the following theoretical models.

It has been assumed that an alliance structure similar to that hypothesized by Abraham Rotstein was operating within the trading region and that trading relationships were shaped by and developed within political alliances[8]. According to this model, trade was an activity which took place between allies and could not take place on a normal or regular basis without benefit of a formal alliance. Indeed all trading sessions were preceded by elaborate ceremonies which served to establish or reaffirm political bonds and the trade tended in some cases to be

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[8]Abraham Rotstein, "Trade and Politics: An Institutional Approach," *The Western Canadian Journal of Anthropology*, III, 1 (1972), 1-28.

an extension of these ceremonies necessary to give substance to the treaty.

The most obvious manifestation of this situation was the fur trade ceremony which, at least in basic essentials, seems to have been both universal and necessary for a successful trade[9]. According to Rotstein, "The elements are always the same, the renewal of the alliance, the smoking of calumet, the giving of gifts, and the banquet."[10] The renewal of alliance required an affirmation of friendship and the profering of marks of esteem and could include speeches, the flying of flags, gun salutes and other marks of hospitality. The smoking of calumet was the central feature of the ceremony and was highly ritualized. The giving of gifts was a mutual obligation and therefore is sometimes difficult to distinguish from trade as a commercial transaction. Tobacco, ammunition and liquor appear to have been frequent components of the gift exchange aspect and with highly regarded cutomers, a complete suit of clothing, modelled on the uniform of a naval or military officer was frequently given both as a gift and a mark of esteem. The feast or banquet which appears

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[9]Ibid. For greater detail on the ceremony used in western Canada see Sandra Nekich, "The Feast of the Dead: The Origin of the Indian-White Trade Ceremonies in the West," *The Western Canadian Journal of Anthropology*, IV, 1 (January, 1974), 1-20; and H. A. Dempsey, "Western Plains Trade Ceremonies," *The Western Canadian Journal of Anthropology*, III, 1 (1972), 29-33.

[10]Rotstein, "Trade and Politics," 16.

to have been intended as a manifestation of hospitality to conclude the ceremony was frequently attenuated to include only the *régal*, a generous allowance of rum or brandy served out to the trading Indians by the traders.

Generally the Indians respected the obligations imposed by the alliance structure. Accordingly they proved to be good credit risks and it became usual to trust Indians with debt in the fall with assurance that they would bring their furs in the spring and settle their accounts. The main problem seems to have been that on occasion they would take their furs to another post operated by the same company. This caused some difficulty in balancing accounts.

Two implications of the trading alliance structure are worthy of further comment.

When traders established a trading alliance with a band or family they established thereby links with other bands or families that were allied with them. These could be used to extend their trade and facilitate movement into new areas. The rapid geographical expansion of the traders which was facilitated in this way strained the relations with Indians which had formerly occupied preferred positions as middlemen. The resentment against the traders could be expressed in outright hostility toward the traders or a breakdown in the patterns of alliance between Indian groups. Outright war against the traders was not acceptable as it would cut off direct access to

the trade goods they desired, so their unhappiness appears to have been expressed by breaking alliances with tribes they had formerly traded while expressing their displeasure with the traders when feasible by such actions as horse raids and occasional acts of violence against isolated individuals[11].

The second implication of the alliance system and the formalized trading ceremony was that it provided points of weakness which could be exploited by rival traders to lure away or "debauch" each other's customers. Allegiance could be won by showing greater friendship, higher esteem or more generosity. As a result, in the scramble to line up customers, ceremonies were elaborated, suits were given more readily, presents became more lavish and the use of liquor more pervasive and extravagent.

One further factor in the establishment and maintenance of fur trade alliances also deserves some discussion. Kinship ties probably proved to be more effective than agreements which could be bought. Certainly there appears to have been a recognition that there were advantages to be gained through the establishment of liaisons with the trading Indians. Whatever advantages may have accrued to the traders probably benefited the Canadian traders more than the English due to the non-fraternization

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[11]Similar comments are found in A. J. Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade* (Toronto, 1974), 104.

regulations of the Hudson's Bay Company[12].

A second model which will be alluded to is one suggested by Abraham Rotstein in a paper delivered at the Second Fur Trade Conference in Winnipeg in 1970[13]. In his paper, Dr. Rotstein pointed out that there were virtually no changes in the trading standards used by the Hudson's Bay Company throughout the eighteenth century despite fluctuations in the market conditions of price and demand in London. He used this as evidence to suggest that prices in the fur trade were established by agreement between the traders and the Indians rather than being established on the basis of market conditions. The conditions parallel very closely those described by Polanyi as constituting an administered trade system[14]. If price was regarded as one of the conditions governed by an alliance agreement, one would expect that attempts to impose changes unilaterally would place a strain on the agreement

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[12]Sylvia Van Kirk, "The Custom of the Country: An Examination of Fur Trade Marriage Practices." (Paper presented at the Canadian Historical Association Conference, 1974) 1-7. It is likely that the regulations of the Hudson's Bay Company against cohabitation with Indian women within the forts may not have been strictly enforced at the inland posts. Following the tradition of the Bayside forts, the masters would certainly have had the opportunity. In addition, the men who spent the winters out on the plains or in the hunters' tents frequently had families. Unfortunately the official journals are largely silent on the topic.

[13]Abraham Rotstein, "The Two Economies of the Hudson's Bay Company." (Paper presented at the Second Fur Trade Conference, Winnipeg, 1970.) A discussion of the same topic is to be found in Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade*, 61-67.

[14]Karl Polanyi, "Anthropology and Economic Theory," in M. H. Fried, *Readings in Anthropology*, II (New York, 1968), 228-238.

and could be considered grounds for a break in friendly relations or a shift in allegiance. Some flexibility was provided by the development of a double standard of trade which was achieved mainly through the manipulation of measurements used at the time of trade or the quality of goods. The difference between the official standard and the actual standard provided what was termed the overplus trade. The overplus was used to provide presents and could be raised or lowered in order to adjust for changing market conditions. There were, however, limits which could not be exceeded without alienating the Indians[15]. The flexibility achieved through the manipulation of quantities or quality is a typical characteristic of administered trade[16].

The third theoretical model which will be utilized is based on the analytical approach used by Arthur J. Ray. Drawing upon data from the disciplines of history, geography and anthropology he studied the changes in the cultural and ecological adaptations of Indians along the eastern parkland fringes of the western plains between 1670 and 1870. The result was what he termed "a historical study in ecological cultural geography".[17] Ray concluded

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[15]E. E. Rich, "The Indian Traders," *The Beaver* (Winter, 1970), 11-20; Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade*, 61-70.

[16]Polanyi, 230.

[17]A. J. Ray, "Indian Exploitation of the Forest-Grassland Transition Zone in Western Canada, 1650-1860: A Geographic View of Two Centuries of Change," (Ph.D. Thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1971), 9.

that the Assiniboine and Cree Indians, who migrated into the parkland area during the early years of the fur trade, adopted a way of life that drew upon the varied resources of the parkland and adjacent parts of the plains and the forests and that they adopted seasonal migration patterns which made the best use of these resources while at the same time taking maximum advantage of their trading relationship with the European factors. Their excursions out onto the plains brought them into contact with other Indian groups from whom they learned practices and techniques like the use of the buffalo pound which gave them a great deal of "ecological flexibility". Ray concluded that

> this flexibility permitted them to make rapid adjustments to changing economic conditions in the late eighteenth century . . . and it facilitated rapid inter-regional migration.[18]

The advancement of fur trade posts into the parkland area in the latter half of the eighteenth century was the principal factor which changed the economic conditions affecting the Cree and Assiniboine. For over half a century they had enjoyed a virtual monopoly as trading Indians and a substantial number of them had become trading specialists acting as agents and middlemen. When trading posts were established in the heart of their territories they could no longer maintain their positions and

---

[18]Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade*, 48.

were forced to adjust to the changed circumstances. Most were unwilling to turn from being traders or middlemen to the life of the trapper or were unable to do so due to a scarcity of suitable trapping territories and declining fur resources in areas near the posts. Consequently many of them appear to have taken advantage of the growing requirements of the fur traders for provisions and intensified their utilization of the bison. In doing so they became Indians of the plains.

Ray's thesis is based on a study of the parklands of Manitoba and eastern Saskatchewan. In this thesis, an attempt will be made to determine whether similar processes can be identified in the parklands of western Saskatchewan and Alberta which formed the trading hinterland to the Pine Island posts.

CHAPTER ONE

THE GEOGRAPHICAL, CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL CIRCUMSTANCES RELATING TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE PINE ISLAND POSTS

In order to establish the context in which the posts on Pine Island were established it is necessary to consider the geographical, cultural and historical parameters of the situation that then existed. In this chapter there will be a discussion of the location of Pine Island and a consideration of its physical resource base with special attention to the critical factors of food, wood for building and fuel, and birch for the making of canoes. The cultural factors to be discussed will relate to both the Indians and the traders, with emphasis on the alliance structure and the state of relations between the Indians and the traders. In discussing the historical situation, attention will be focused on the relative positions of the Hudson's Bay Company and the Canadian concerns active in the area, with an assessment of their strengths and weaknesses.

Pine Island is located in the North Saskatchewan River opposite the mouth of Big Gully Creek about

fifty miles upstream from the present City of North Battleford. It is in the heart of the parkland, a transitional vegetative zone between the boreal forests and the northern prairies or grasslands. In the western half of Saskatchewan, the parkland zone is very narrow, varying from twenty to sixty miles in width, becoming progressively broader as one moves west towards the Alberta boundary. In the vicinity of Pine Island it reaches its maximum width. On the basis of present vegetative patterns[1], the island is located about fifteen miles south of the forest zone and forty-five miles north of the grasslands (see Figure 2).

Pine Island itself is a fairly typical aluvial island about three-quarters of a mile long. Through the years the island has been moving slowly downstream as the river has eaten away at its soft foundations, sweeping silt and sand down from its prow-like upstream end and redepositing it in the quiet waters below the island. The newest part of the island is a sand bar visible only at low water. Then as one moves up the island, one passes through a succession of grassy plants into thickets of

---

[1]Patterns of vegetation in the historic past may have differed significantly from those which exist now. The browsing activities of bison and elk, frequent prairie fires and minor climatic variations have been factors of importance. The first two of these at least would have tended to encourage an expansion of the grassland into what is now parkland. It is therefore conceivable that the parkland was much narrower in 1786 than it now is.

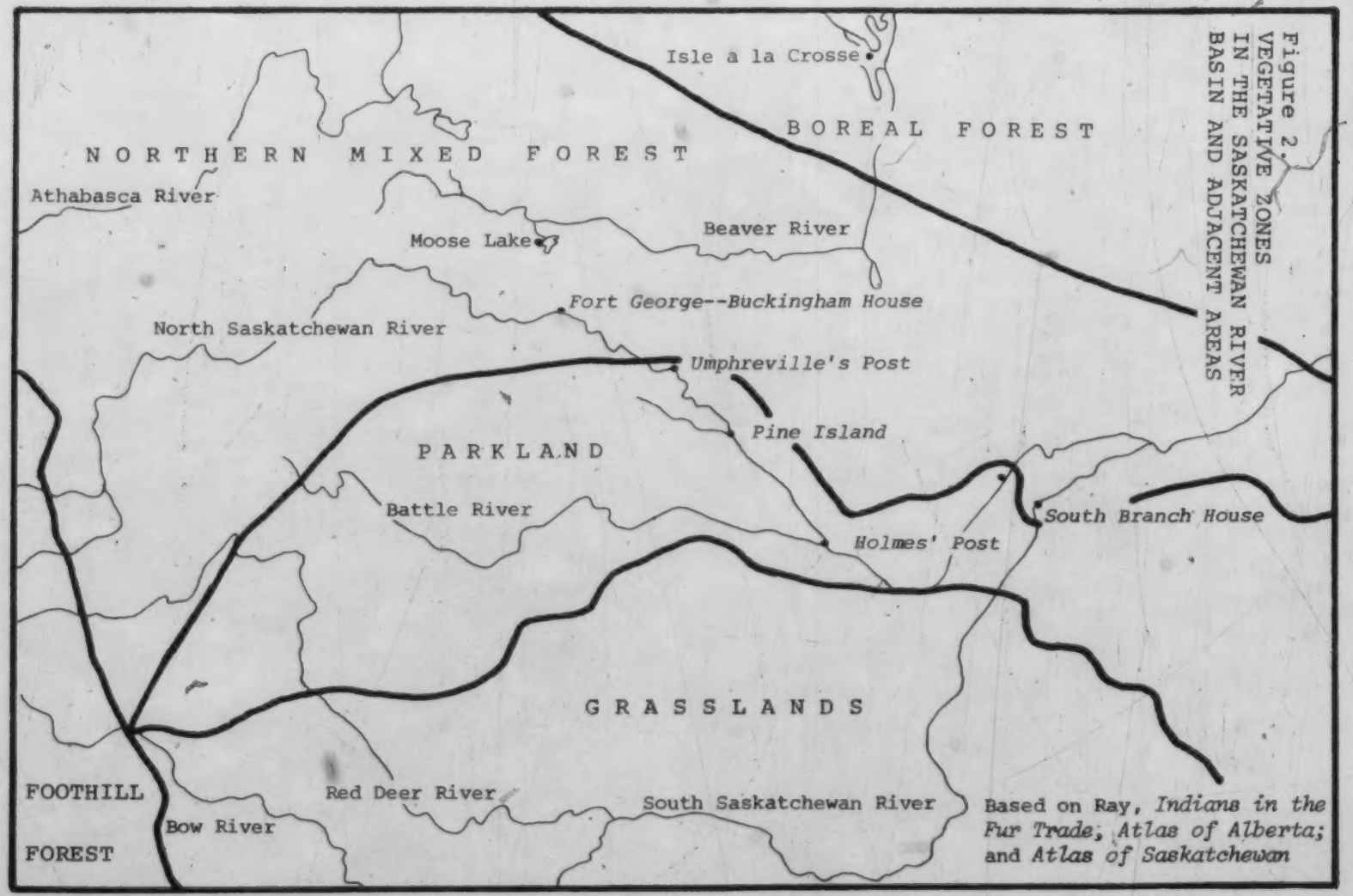

Figure 2.
VEGETATIVE ZONES
IN THE SASKATCHEWAN RIVER
BASIN AND ADJACENT AREAS

willow, across hummocky meadows and finally through dense stands of aspen into a lofty forest of black poplar and spruce which clothe the major part of the island and have given it both its historic name and the current one, Spruce Island (Plate I).

Locations along the North Saskatchewan valley offered many natural advantages to both Indian and trader, and Pine Island was no exception to this rule. The parkland is a favoured zone from an ecological point of view, boasting a broader range of natural resources than either the deep forest or the open plains[2]. In addition, residents of the area had access to both the adjacent zones because of the their proximity.

Food resources were abundant throughout the year. Of greatest importance to the traders were the bison which sought shelter in the parkland in the depth of the winter and were therefore usually to be found at no great distance. If the bison were scarce, as they sometimes were in a warm winter when they could stay out on the plains, the plains were not at a prohibitive distance and moose were generally available in the parklands and in the mixed aspen-spruce forests to the north. If all else failed there were large numbers of elk or wapiti whose flesh was not favoured because of "of the peculiar quality

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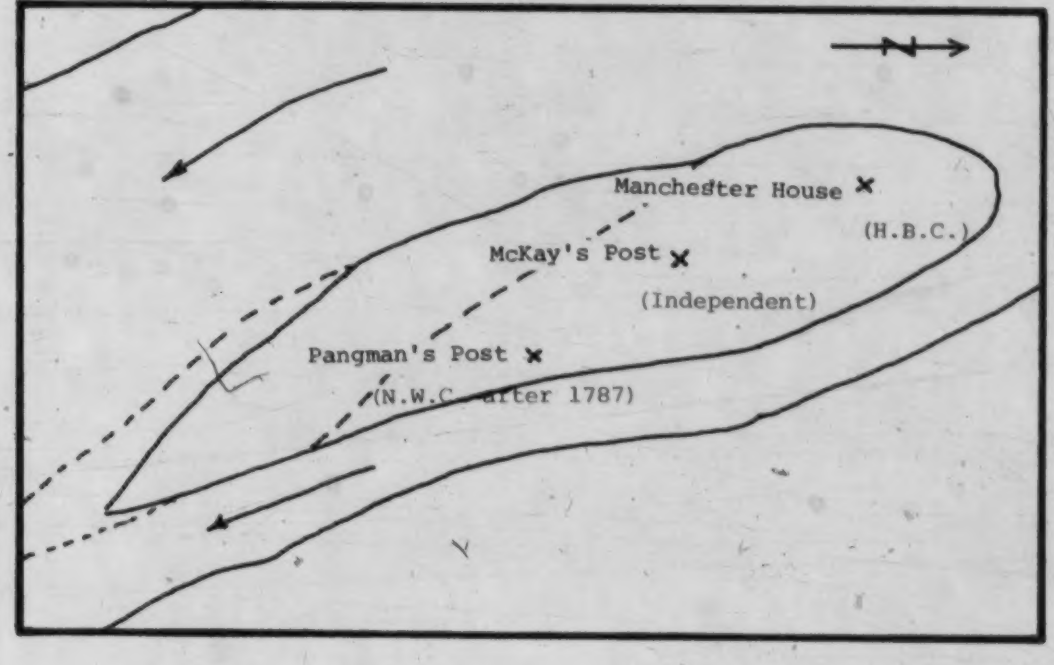
[2]Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade*, 27-29. More detailed information is contained in R. D. Bird, *Ecology of the Aspen Parkland of Western Canada* (Ottawa, 1961).

Plate I:

AERIAL VIEW OF PINE ISLAND LOOKING UPSTREAM



quality of the fat" which the traders found to be distasteful[3]. Fish were also available in substantial quantities in the parkland lakes but were not utilized heavily in the early years of the fur trade because of the relative abundance of big game animals[4].

In 1786, the western parkland was also very rich in fur-bearing animals. Despite the exploitation of this resource for almost a century the local trade at Pine Island in such furs as beaver, marten, otter and wolves was substantial. Such animals were initially very abundant in the parkland, especially the beaver which flourished in a land of aspen poplar, its preferred food, and numerous small lakes and potholes.

In addition to its favourable siting with respect to food and fur resources, Pine Island was also well supplied with timber for use in building and for fuel. The island itself was covered with fine spruce which served for the initial construction of the posts. Nevertheless journal accounts demonstrate that by 1788 at the latest

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[3]W. S. Wallace, editor, *The Present State of Hudson's Bay Containing a Full Description of that Settlement, and the Adjacent Country; and Likewise of the Fur Trade with Hints for its Improvement, etc. etc. by Edward Umphreville* (Toronto, 1954), 83-84.

[4]There are no references to fishing in the Manchester House Journals but excavations conducted by the author on Pine Island in the summer of 1966 revealed evidence that fish were an occasional component of the diet at the North West Company post. For a preliminary report on these excavations see A. J. Ranere, "Pine Island (Fh Og-1): A Report on the Archaeological Fieldwork," (Manuscript in Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History, 1966).

the traders had to go up Big Gully Creek to cut wood for use in their fireplaces[5]. In 1792, Peter Fidler wrote that there was

> no pine at present on it [Pine Island] although at first it was well covered with that wood but the different buildings and the firewood have quite destroyed it.[6]

Wood was plentiful enough in the area that it was unlikely to prove more than a minor inconvenience as the source of timber gradually became more distant.

The availability of birchwood was a more serious consideration. Birch was the only hardwood of any quality available in the region. It was therefore invaluable in the construction of furnishings, fur presses, snowshoes, sleds and canoes. While small trees could do for all of the former uses, as well as the woodwork or frames of canoes, large trees were essential for the bark used as a covering or skin on the canoes. Such large trees do not appear to have existed within a reasonable distance of the island at the time of its occupation. This was to prove a major inconvenience to the Hudson's Bay Company particularly, which was dependent on canoes made at its inland posts for its transportation system.

When Pine Island became a centre of the fur

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[5]H.B.A., B121/a/3, Manchester House Journal, December 23, 1788.

[6]H.B.A., E3/1, Journals of Peter Fidler, October 4, 1792.

trade it was located in territories occupied by Cree Indians. At this time the Cree were the dominant group in the forests and parklands along the North Saskatchewan River up to at least the Beaver Hills (see Figure 3.) Their subsistence pattern was probably similar to that described by Ray for the Western Cree[7], although some differences may have existed. In the fall and early winter they stayed in the forests hunting moose and beaver and other fur-bearing animals. As the winter progressed they came out into the parklands to hunt bison. In the spring they would congregate at fishing stations on the shores of lakes or along streams or rivers. In the summer they appear to have stayed in the forest or parkland where summer food resources were plentiful.

Occupying territories in the same zone as the Cree were small bands of Assiniboine, usually referred to in the journals as Swampy Ground Assiniboine. They seem to have been concentrated in an area north-west of Pine Island and undoubtedly followed a subsistence pattern very similar to that of the Cree[8].

The main body of the Assiniboine had adapted to a parkland-plains existence and were concentrated to the east of the South Saskatchewan River. They were the major

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[7]Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade*, 47.

[8]Andersen, R. R., "Alberta Stoney (Assiniboin) Origins and Adaptations: A Case for Reappraisal," *Ethnohistory*, XVII, Number 1-2 (1970), 49-61.

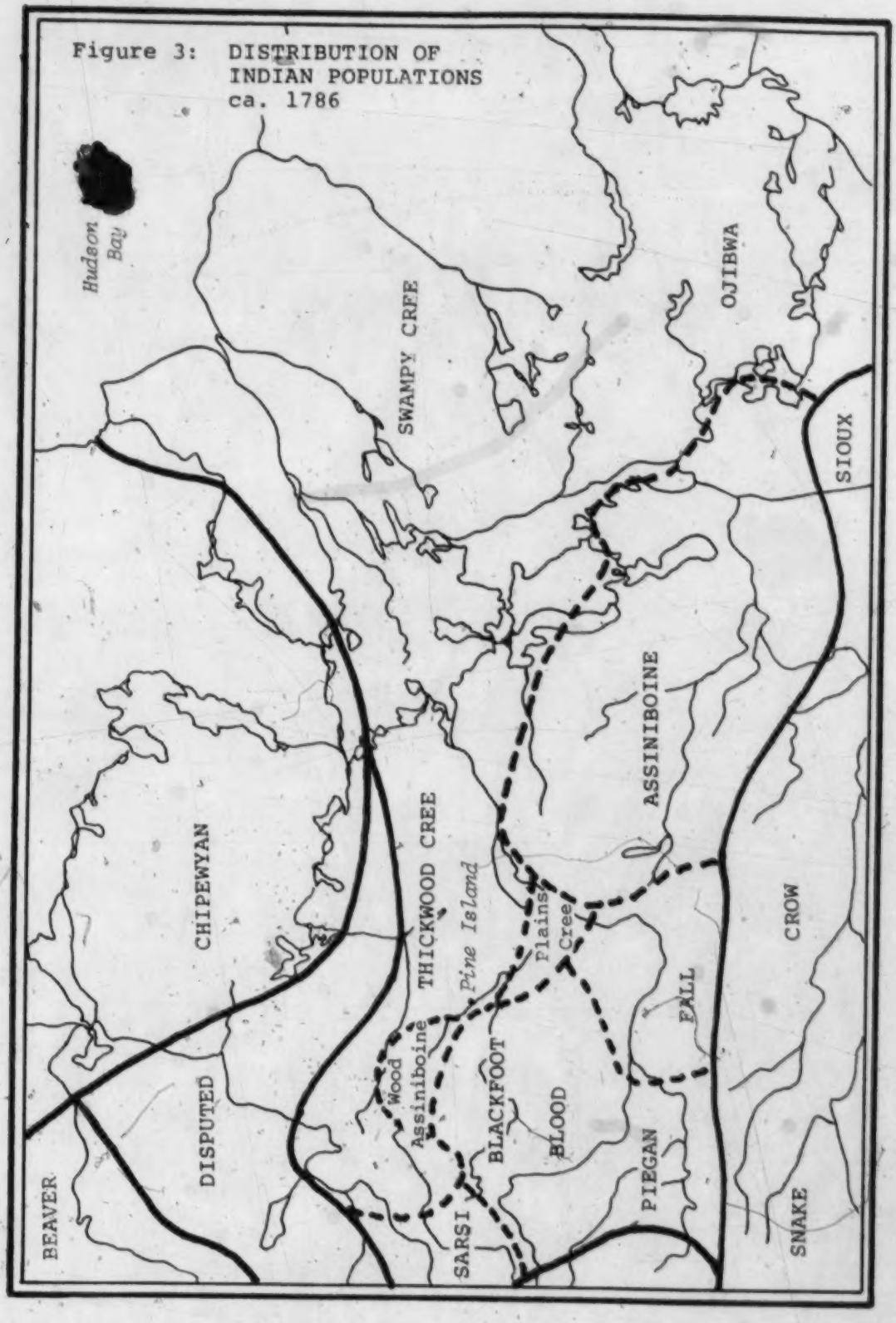

Figure 3: DISTRIBUTION OF INDIAN POPULATIONS ca. 1786

suppliers of provisions to the fur traders and still brought in substantial quantities of furs as well. The Assiniboine were closely allied with the Cree.

The subsistence pattern of the Assiniboine helped them to maintain close contact with the Cree. In the winter both Cree and Assiniboine tended to congregate in the parklands where the buffalo found refuge and where they could set up their pounds. The parklands east of the south branch of the Saskatchewan River offer a wide variety of ecological resources in a limited area and it is unlikely that they would have had to move great distances to utilize them. Accordingly they likely spent most of the year in the parklands or on the fringes of the grasslands. As they acquired larger numbers of horses, they probably engaged more and more in summer or fall bison hunts. Spring and summer were also the preferred seasons for sending out raiding parties to steal horses and make war on distant Indians[9].

Small bands of Cree were moving out onto the plains at this time in close association with the Assiniboine. It is likely that many of these were constituted of families which had formerly been trading specialists or middlemen. Unable or unwilling to compete with trapping specialists for access to worthwhile hunting territories,

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[9]Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade*, 47.

they seized opportunities to provide provisions for the use of the fur trade companies. The intensification of their utilization of grassland resources was facilitated by the contacts they had acquired as trading Indians and the wealth they had achieved. Possessing large number of horses and guns they were well equipped to make a rapid and successful evolution towards a plains-oriented culture[10].

The Gros Ventres, Atsina or, as they were usually termed by the traders, the Fall Indians were to be found along the South Saskatchewan River and the adjacent grasslands. Little is known about these Indians at this time as they appear to have had little to do with the traders although they had traded regularly for many years. Edward Umphreville noted that the North West Company did not have any interpreters that spoke their language and the Hudson's Bay Company seems to have been in the same position[11]. They were considered to be a very poor people with little to offer in trade but wolves and some provisions. They were well supplied with horses and were undoubtedly adapted to a grasslands economy.

Living far up the North Saskatchewan River were

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[10]Ibid., 131-133. Ray emphasizes the need for a new economic role to replace their middleman status. The other factors are emphasized in D. G. Mandelbaum, *The Plains Cree* (New York, 1940), 178-183.

[11]Wallace, *The Present State of Hudson's Bay* by Edward Umphreville, 102. A discussion of the history of the Gros Ventres is contained in Regina Flannery, *The Gros Ventres of Montana*, Part I (Washington, 1953), 1-24.

a recent offshoot of the Beaver Indians, the Sarsi. The only Athabaskan speakers to trade at the Saskatchewan River posts, the Sarsi in 1786 appear to have been closely allied with the Cree Indians. Still living in the northern mixed forests, their subsistence patterns were probably similar to those of the western Cree with whom they associated, but they were not regarded as good fur hunters and may already have been moving onto the plains from the northwest[12].

South-west of the Pine Island site lay the lands of the Blackfoot and the closely related Blood and Piegan Indians. The Blackfoot were still primarily a parklands people living mainly in the Battle River area. The Blood and Piegan wintered further south in the grasslands and foothills between the Red Deer River and the Oldman. All three were well supplied with horses and made extensive use of the grassland ecology although their dependence on the resources of the parkland and foothill forests should not be underestimated. They brought in large numbers of furs to the posts on the North Saskatchewan River. The three tribes shared a similar culture and language and usually worked together in a very close alliance[13].

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[12]Diamond Jenness, *The Sarcee Indians of Alberta* (Ottawa, 1938).

[13]Oscar Lewis, *The Effects of White Contact upon Blackfoot Culture, with Special Reference to the Fur Trade* (New York, 1942).

All of the aforementioned Indian peoples were regular customers of the fur trading companies and to differing degrees had developed some dependency on the trade. The specialist fur trappers, who were mainly to be found among the Thickwoods Cree and the Swampy Ground Assiniboine, were the most dependent upon the fur traders among those bands which traded on the upper part of the Saskatchewan system. A median position was occupied by the Assiniboine and Cree who were beginning to find increasing independence based on a grassland orientation. In a similar position were the Blackfoot and the Sarsi who had not yet been associated long enough with the fur trade to become heavily dependent on it but whose situations gave them an opportunity to adopt fur trapping specialization with the growing dependence it would imply. The Blood and Piegan were only beginning to enter into a regular direct trade with European posts and were interested mainly in guns, tobacco and other articles which might be considered as luxury goods[14].

All of the Indians discussed above appear to have been bound up within a single alliance system. According to David Thompson's informant, Saukamappee, the Cree and Assiniboine had co-operated with the Blackfoot speakers in making war against the Snakes, Indians of

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[14]A similar range of dependence is noted by Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade*, 146-147.

Shoshoni stock who apparently occupied the high plains south of the Old Man River[15]. Certainly, all of the tribes referred to seem to have been involved in trading activities with each other and with the European traders. The boundaries of the alliance were established in such a way as to exclude the Shoshoni, Crow and Sioux to the south, the Kutenai and Shuswap to the west and almost all of the Athabaskan or Dene Indians who occupied the boreal forest to the north, particularly the Sekani, Beaver and Chipewyan. To the east, there were friendly relations with the Bungee or Swampy Cree and the Ojibway.

The alliance structure was not inelastic, nor did it encompass the entire trading universe. The Piegan and Blood Indians did meet with the Shoshoni and Kutenai Indians on a peaceful basis from time to time to exchange European trade goods for horses[16]. The Mandan villages served as trade centres which could bring together the Cree, Assiniboine and Sioux Indians[17]. Trading

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[15]Richard Glover, editor, *David Thompson's Narrative 1784-1812* (Toronto, 1962). Some scholars dispute the validity of identifying the Snake as Shoshoni on the basis of their interpretation of archaeological evidence. See H. A. Dempsey, "David Thompson Under Scrutiny," *Alberta Historical Review*, XII (Winter, 1964), 22-28; and Forbis, R., *Some Late Sites in the Oldman River Region, Alberta* (Ottawa, 1957).

[16]F. R. Secoy, *Changing Military Patterns of the Great Plains* (New York, 1953); and J. G. MacGregor, *Peter Fidler: Canada's Forgotten Surveyor 1769-1822* (Toronto, 1966), 74-79.

[17]Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade*, 46-47.

appears to have been possible with enemy peoples despite the usual prerequisite of a political alliance. On some occasions it was probably conducted under temporary truce agreements. In other cases it may have been conducted through intermediaries like the Mandan who were at peace with both the Sioux and the Assiniboine.

In discussing the cultural framework one must also consider the European traders. Although it is true to say that on a broad level they all shared a common cultural background which can be termed western European, there were substantial and significant differences which were conditioned or influenced by the specific countries or regions from which they came and their experience within their respective fur trade systems.

In the latter part of the eighteenth century, the Hudson's Bay Company drew the major part of its labour force from the Orkney Islands. According to Richard Glover they constituted about 75% of the total during this period[18]. If this is an accurate estimate, the percentage employed inland was even higher. In 1786, only two out of 59 men were not from the Orkneys and these were old servants who had served inland for many years[19]. For all in-

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[18]Glover, *Cumberland House and Inland Journals*, Second Series, xxxvii.

[19]The two exceptions were Isaac Batt and his brother James. H.B.A., B239/f/1, York Factory Lists of Servants.

tents one could say that the inland service was a preserve of the Orkney labourers.

Richard Glover, in discussing the characteristics of the Orkney labourers, concluded that they constituted a first class work force whose greatest defect was that it was never large enough[20]. In this argument he concurred with the opinion of Edward Umphreville who characterized them as "a close, prudent quiet people, strictly faithful to their employers and sordidly avaricious"[21] who could master the art of inland navigation as well as the voyageurs from Quebec and in balance made a superior servant. If they had any weakness it was their appreciation for financial gain, but with appropriate incentives this could be and was turned to the Company's advantage.

Keeping in mind the pitfalls of implying that certain national characterizations could be universal, the evidence seems to support the contention that the Orcadian was an excellent worker, conscientious, hardy and hard working and possessed with a very strong sense of their worth. There is also evidence that they were prepared to cooperate with each other for mutual benefit and had a strong sense of familial and local loyalty.

Most of the men were recruited from the Main-

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[20]Glover, *Cumberland House and Inland Journals*, Second Series, xxxvi to lvii.

[21]Wallace, *The Present State of Hudson's Bay by Edward Umphreville*, 109.

land of Orkney or adjacent islands, particularly Burray and South Ronaldsay (see Figure 4 and Table 1). Here most of the families lived on small holdings of land, eking out a living based on the exploitation of the resources of both land and sea. Many also practised specialized crafts for their own benefit and that of the local community. Accordingly, most of the men were handy and experienced in a broad range of physical activities[22].

Table 1:

PARISH OF ORIGIN FOR ORKNEY SERVANTS EMPLOYED INLAND IN YORK FACTORY IN 1786[1]

Mainland Parishes	Burray	South Ronaldsay	Wares[2]	Rousay	Not Given
41	4	4	2	1	6

[1] H.B.A., B239/f/1, York Factory Lists of Servants.
[2] Probably refers to the parish of Walls.

Coming from an essentially rural society they were used to a more simple life than a Londoner and less "acquainted with the ways and debaucheries of the town."[23]

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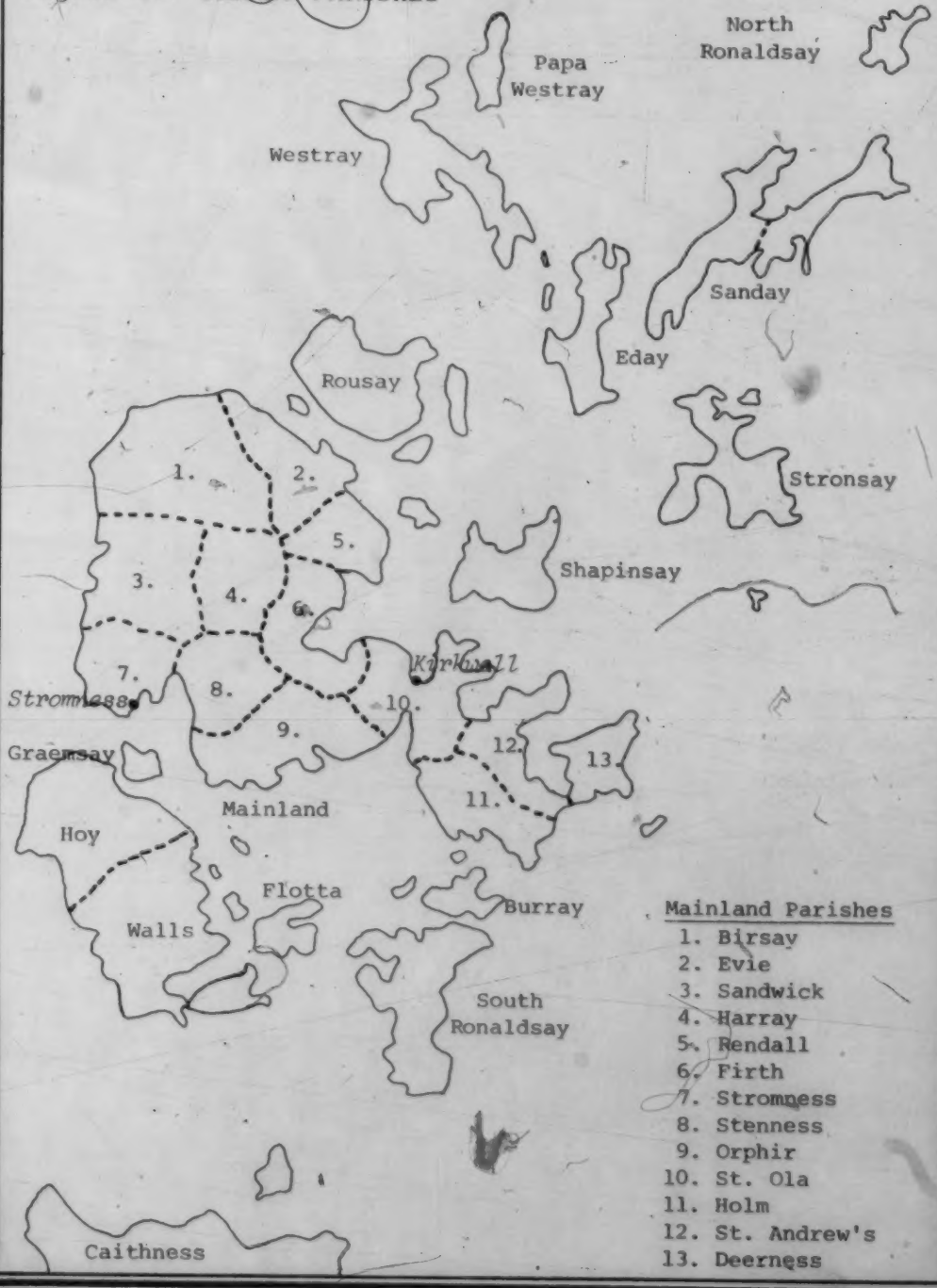
[22] E. W. Marwick, "Colonists and Adventurers," (Manuscript in the Glenbow-Alberta Institute Archives, n.d.). A similar pattern is still evident today in some parts of the Orkneys. For example, while visiting the area in 1972, my wife and I met a man by the name of William Sinclair Mowatt on the island of South Ronaldsay. Mr. Mowatt practiced some agriculture on his small holding, did some fishing, was a local handyman and carpenter and was an accomplished blacksmith. The latter trade was one that had been in the family for generations and he still practiced it in an ancient "smitty" adjacent to his home.

[23] K. G. Davies, editor, *Letters from Hudson's Bay 1703-1740* (London, 1965), 116.

Figure 4: ORKNEY PARISHES



Based on J. Gunn, *Orkney the Magnetic North*.

For this reason it is likely that they would be able to adapt more easily to the social isolation occasioned by the fur trade way of life.

"Frugal and industrious, grave in demeanour, and quiet in their ways"[24] the Orcadian reflected the impact of his Presbyterian and island upbringing. Although they lacked exposure to the more cosmopolitan experiences which an Englishman might enjoy, they were probably less distant from the English middle class than English labourers would have been, for they shared some of the same ideals. In addition to recognizing the virtues of sobriety and industry, they had a similar respect for the value of money. When Umphreville referred to them as being "sordidly avaricious" it is evident that it was their manner and not their aspiration that elicited his critical comment. The hope for financial or pecuniary gain was all the incentive required to encourage, from the Orkneymen, their best efforts. Thus it was that the bounty system established in the late 1770's proved immensely successful.

The Orcadians, like the Scots who came to control the North West Company, had another qualification which was not shared by the English working classes. They had been exposed to a system of public education which was

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[24]Daniel Gorrie, *Summers and Winters in the Orkneys* (Kirkwall, 1869), 328.

undoubtedly superior to that available in most of England. The exposure was not uniform and some of the Orkney servants were only barely literate. But a surprising number of those who came into the service as labourers were equipped to advance into the officer class[25]. This was to prove one of the most marked differences between the Hudson's Bay Company and the Canadian companies. The voyageur could not hope for promotion to the rank of *bourgeois*.

Other qualities of considerable value were the hardiness and self-sufficiency which were the heritage of all Orcadians. Their history and their physical and social environment all worked towards this end. The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were times of great social stress and economic exploitation in the Orkneys, and the eighteenth, if less harsh, has been termed an "age of stagnation".[26] The majority of the islanders lived as small cottagers or farmers. Industries, other than the kelp and straw-plaiting industries, were non-commercial and the

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[25]Glover, *Cumberland House and Inland Journals*, Second Series, lv to lvii.

[26]J. Shearer and others, editors, *The New Orkney Book* (London, 1967), 24-30. Other discussions of the economic and social conditions in the Orkneys are contained in the following: Patrick Bailey, *Orkney* (Newton Abbot, 1971), 97-116; Glover, *Cumberland House and Inland Journals*, Second Series, xlv to xlviii; Eric Linklater, *Orkney and Shetland: An Historical, Geographical, Social and Scenic Survey* (London, 1965), 85; Patrick Neill, *A Tour Through Some of the Islands of Orkney and Shetland* (Edinburgh, 1806), 6-32; A. C. O'Dell and K. Walton, *The Highlands and Islands of Scotland* (London, 1962), 194-195; Richard Pococke, *Tours in Scotland 1747, 1750, 1760* (Edinburgh, 1887), 138-153.

sources of cash income were therefore so limited that Orcadians had to develop a high level of self-sufficiency. What they could not produce in the islands they generally had to do without.

The most important cash crop in the Orkneys was kelp, a sea weed which was gathered and burned in kilns along the shore in order to obtain soda ash, an important industrial chemical which was especially valuable during times of war when alternative supplies were endangered or cut off. A major source of cash however was the money earned by Orcadians employed outside the islands. In the eighteenth century, the most important labour markets were provided by the navy and the army, whose needs fluctuated depending on need, the whale fishery which was the largest regular employer of seasonal labour and the Hudson's Bay Company which was a major employer of young men for longer periods of time[27]. For those who desired to make a stake which could be used to buy a small holding, the Hudson's Bay Company probably provided the best opportunity[28].

This certainly appears to have been the motivation of many who contracted to serve the company. Unfortunately there do not appear to be any studies which demonstrate the success rate achieved by them in this am-

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[27]Marwick, *op. cit.*

[28]Glover, *Cumberland House and Inland Journals*, Second Series, xlviii.

bition but their ability to save large amounts of money can be demonstrated. A random check of servants' accounts shows that labourers could save almost all of the money they earned, building up substantial balances which they could draw upon when they completed their service[29]. Indeed they were prevented by company policy from drawing upon more than a fraction of their yearly wage for their own use. Undoubtedly the Company had more than the good of the employee at heart in establishing such regulations. By restricting the expenditures of their servants they limited the quantity of private possessions they could accrue which might be used for private trade, and they established a large fund which they could utilize as business capital without paying any interest on it.

The Orkney servants were frequently accused of being clannish[30]. This appears to have been true. They came from a society where ties to family and neighbourhood were of great social significance. When they were brought out to Hudson's Bay, they doubtless retained most of their prejudices and loyalties. And coming from a country where residents from each parish shared local *Tee* or nicknames

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[29]Using a sample of eight servants' accounts as recorded in H.B.A. A16/33, it was determined that on the average these men were able to save at least 75% of their earnings. This would not include any money which many financially shrewd servants withdrew from their accounts from time to time to invest in bonds or other interest-bearing certificates.

[30]Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company*, II, 128.

like Skerry Scrapers or Bloody Puddings[31], their prejudices and loyalties were very strong. It would be interesting to examine kinship ties between the Orkney servants to determine what role they may have played in the recruitment of new servants and in their subsequent careers. In the absence of such a detailed study one can go no further than to suggest ~~that~~ the fact that most servants came from a limited area of the Orkneys suggests that many of them must have been acquainted with each other before becoming employees of the Hudson's Bay Company.

The life style of the islanders was probably a major factor in preparing the men to be content with living conditions at the Bay and inland[32]. At home their clothing was made from coarse, undyed homemade cloth woven by the women from the wool of their ~~own poor~~ sheep. All other articles of apparel were likewise of home manufacture. To them the goods transported to the Bay and available to them as "Slops" must have seemed almost as precious as the goods they traded seemed to the Indians.

A similar comparison can be made with their housing. Using nothing but local stone, clay and turfs

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[31]J. R. Tudor, *The Orkneys and Shetland; Their Past and Present State* (London), 1883), 612-614.

[32]Good descriptions of their life style are contained in the following: H. Marwick, editor, "A Description of Orkney" by Rev. George Low in 1773, *Proceedings of the Orkney Antiquarian Society*, II (1923-24), 53-54; Pococke, 152; and Shearer and others, 26.

with a few precious sticks of wood they constructed their long, low cottages. Even in the towns, the style of architecture was decidedly unpretentious. In many ways, the log buildings of the inland posts were infinitely better in warmth and dryness despite the more severe climate.

In diet also they frequently found the inland posts to be more generous, in quantity and quality if not in variety. In the Orkneys, meat was somewhat of a luxury, the main protein sources being old mutton, dried fish, birds' eggs and shellfish. Bannocks made from oat or barley flour, hardy greens, potatoes and turnips all washed down with water or ale completed their traditional diet. Crop failures were not infrequent and famine was not unknown. In contrast, the posts along the Saskatchewan River offered ample supplies of fresh meat which could be supplemented by garden produce, fish and berries. The variety was limited but it was a better and more healthy regimen.

In summary, the Orkney Islands offered an ideal source of manpower for the Hudson's Bay Company, or would have done if the quality of the product were the only criterion. However as Richard Glover has pointed out, it proved to be an uncertain source in the latter part of the eighteenth century because of the small size of the labour pool and the large numbers pressed into the service of the army and navy during the long periods of war which characterized the forty years between 1775 and

1815[33]. The strongest and the best were siphoned off and few of those which were available could meet the Company's own requirements for strong able-bodied young labourers. This problem was not a factor in 1786, when Manchester House was established, as the American war had been over for three years and the wars against France were still almost a decade away.

As already intimated, some of the labouring men were able to rise through the ranks. In 1786 three of the inland officers had this background. From the Orkneys were William Tomison, the ranking officer inland, and Malcholm Ross who was just in the process of making the transition from labouring man to officer. Robert Longmoor who came from Edinburgh, was the most senior officer after Tomison.

William Tomison[34] was probably the most experienced inland traveller and trader in the Northwest at the time. Born on the island of South Ronaldsay in 1739 he had joined the Hudson's Bay Company as a labourer in 1760. He spent his first five years service at York Factory

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[33]Glover, "The Difficulties . . .", 245-251.

[34]A number of biographical sketches of Tomison have been consulted. The most useful were the following: J. B. Tyrrell, *Journals of Hearne and Turnor* (Toronto, 1934), 581-591; E. W. Marwick, "William Tomison, Pioneer of the Fur Trade," *Alberta Historical Review*, X, (Autumn, 1962), 1-8.

where he caught the eye of Andrew Graham[35], chief at Severn Fort, who chose him to be his steward. In 1767 and again in 1769 he was sent inland to act as assistant to Matthew Cocking[36] at Cumberland House and in the spring of 1778 he succeeded to the position of inland master, a position he still held in 1786.

William Tomison was a vigorous energetic man who was not reluctant to do the same work he expected from his men and appears to have commanded their respect. At the age of 47 he was considerably older than any of his fellow officers inland, but it does not appear to have slowed him down appreciably. Already he was beginning to show some of the personality traits which were to increasingly isolate him from his colleagues in later years. In 1785 he had quarrelled bitterly with his immediate superior, Humphrey Marten, with the result that both asked to be allowed to return home. He was also disliked by some of the other inland officers, and had earned the

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[35]Andrew Graham was chief at Severn for a number of years and acting Governor at York Fort from 1772 until 1775 during the crucial years when the Company embarked on its policy of establishing inland trading posts. A protege of James Isham, he in turn appears to have adopted William Tomison and for many years after his retirement in 1775 remained his close friend and supporter. Glyndwr Williams, editor, *Andrew Graham's Observations on Hudson's Bay* (London, 1969).

[36]Matthew Cocking had been appointed Inland Master to replace Samuel Hearne in 1775. Cocking retired and returned to England in 1777.

hatred of many of the Canadian traders.

The causes for these problems were probably complex. He was an Orkney labourer who had gained preferment over Englishmen who had been trained to be officers. He was combative, stubborn, blunt and forthright in his manner and sometimes deliberately abrasive. He was jealous of his position, ambitious and anxious to increase his trade as much as possible. In 1786, most of these qualities were advantageous to him and the Company as it faced increased competition from the Canadian traders. In later years, with growing disillusionment and bitterness on his part, they were turned increasingly against his colleagues until he was judged by William Auld, a not wholly unbiased observer, to be "extremely unpleasant among the Officers most of whom are averse from having any connection with him."[37] This, however, was in the future and does not apply to his reputation on the eve of the establishment of posts on Pine Island. The Company was highly pleased with his management of inland affairs and considered him a logical replacement for Humphrey Marten whenever he might retire.

Malcholm Ross[38], a native of the island of Burray, was born about 1754 and entered the service of the Company as a labourer in 1774. He served inland from the

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[37]Tyrrell, *Journals of Hearne and Turnor*, 590.

[38]Ibid., 598-600.

fall of 1775 and although still classed as a canoeman he served as occasional master at Cumberland House as early as the summer of 1783, and by 1786 was frequently given responsibility normally accorded only to officers of the Company.

Robert Longmoor[39] had entered service in 1771 as a labourer and came inland in 1774 with Samuel Hearne. Here he soon distinguished himself as a man of great ingenuity and resourcefulness. A good linguist he commanded the respect of the Indians and was sent out on pioneer trading missions to the Churchill River and up the Saskatchewan. He was the natural choice to establish the first parkland post, Hudson House, and to carry competition right to the doorsteps of the Canadian traders. Perhaps his most significant contribution was in learning the skills necessary for the making of birch bark canoes. In 1777 he made a large one after the manner of the Canadian canoes and in succeeding years he passed his skills on to other servants thereby assuring the Company of suitable vessels for use on the inland waterways. In 1781, his career suffered a severe setback when his men at Hudson House accused him of drunkeness and unfair treatment and to a man refused to serve with him any longer. Although the governor of York Factory, Humphrey Marten, believed him innocent, he was removed from his position as master at

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[39]Glover, *Cumberland House and Inland Journals*, First Series, xxxi to xxxiv.

Hudson House, an action which cost him both status and the financial rewards of the bounties of furs traded there. Since that time he had been subjected to a series of further frustrations.

Assigned to head up an expedition into the Athabasca country in the fall of 1781, Longmoor's plans were frustrated by the smallpox epidemic of that winter which made it impossible to acquire sufficient provisions for the proposed venture. The capture of York Fort by the French in the summer of 1782 left him trapped inland without any possibility of following through with his commission and with hopes of advancement barred. In such a circumstance his discontentment must have simmered and matured. It was about this time that he fell out with Tomison, his former friend and ally, and it was during this period that Tomison appears to have formed the opinion that Longmoor was too fond of liquor to be trusted with any important trading position. This opinion was not shared by Marten, and in 1785 he was appointed to be second-in-command to Samuel Hearne at Churchill with the responsibility of establishing an inland trade system there similar to that in the Saskatchewan-Nelson basin. However, as he had been left inland in charge of Hudson House, his appointment had to be deferred for a year and he spent another frustrating year inland under Tomison's command.

Although the majority of inland officers in 1786 were men who had risen from the ranks, the Hudson's Bay

Company had long followed a policy of trying to develop an officer class through an apprenticeship system. Two products of the system were stationed inland, William Walker[40] and George Hudson[41]. Little is known of Walker's background before he was apprenticed to the Company in 1768 at the age of fifteen. He was an Englishman and probably a Londoner as was the case with almost all of the apprentices. Hudson was apprenticed to the Company in 1775 at the age of thirteen from Grey Coats Hospital in London. Walker served his apprenticeship at the Bay, coming inland as writer in 1775. From this time on his career was tied to the development of the inland trade. Hudson followed a similar, although accelerated path. Coming inland in 1778 while still an apprentice he already had served as writer and occasional master at Cumberland House before completing his apprenticeship.

By 1786 William Walker had still not achieved a firm grasp on command of one of the inland posts although he had served as master at Hudson House. This may have been in part due to the claims to seniority which both Tomison and Longmoor shared but was also influenced by the assessment of Humphrey Marten, Governor of York Factory, who felt him to be unsettled and too unpopular

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[40]Ibid., xxxiv to xxxv; and Tyrrell, *Journals of Hearne and Turnor*, 215-216.

[41]Ibid., 198 n.2.

with the Orkney labourers to command their respect and manage them effectively. George Hudson, in contrast, had earned high praise from his superiors and had served as master at Cumberland House almost continuously since 1782. He appears to have been regarded as the principal candidate to become inland master once the more senior men had served their terms.

The relations between the English officers and the Orkney men was not always very cordial as indicated by Walker's experience and the situation was probably not improved by the presence of Orkney officers. Prejudice was probably present on both sides for the Orkneymen were clannish in outlook and looked upon the English as being foreign. For their part, the English officers tended to look down upon the Orcadians and deeply resented the coolness with which they were treated in response. There is some suggestion that the men found ready support from their countryman, Tomison, which tended to lead to bad feelings between Tomison and some of the other officers, notably Robert Longmoor and William Walker.

The Canadian companies had a very different demographic makeup. The *voyageurs* or *engagés* were all hired in the St. Lawrence valley and were of French-Canadian origin. The highest position to which they could aspire was that of Interpreter. Initially most of the *bourgeois* were from Montreal or Quebec and were recruited from the ranks of the merchant class or the military establishment

which came there after 1759. The national background was quite varied, although most came from either the American colonies or from Britain. Increasingly, clerks were being recruited directly in Britain where preference was given to Highland Scots, many contacted through the wide-ranging kinship connections of Scots already engaged in the fur trade[42].

The majority of the voyageurs came from the Montreal-Trois Rivieres area of Lower Canada. They were in most cases fur trade specialists, and those who were *hommes du nord* rarely had any direct contact with their homes during the life of their contracts. With a long tradition of involvement in the fur trade they shared a technical expertise in the handling of canoes, facility with the Indian languages and an adaptation to the conditions of the northwest which was not parallelled by the employees of the Hudson's Bay Company. In many ways their cultural background was therefore not that of Lower Canada but rather that of the fur trade. This was reflected in and demonstrated by the unique life style they developed.

At first glance they formed a colourful group of men with their distinctive costume of a bright red cap,

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[42]An extensive study of these kinship connections has been undertaken by Jennifer Brown, "Apprentices and Kinsmen: The Selection of Personnel by the Hudson's Bay and Northwest Companies," (Paper read at the Canadian Ethnological Society Conference, 1975.)

shirt, leggings, moccasins and *Assomption* sash. And indeed they approached life with a certain flair which caught the fancy of contemporary observers. Handling their canoes as if born to the task they developed an entire culture around them, complete with songs, artistic expression in the form of designs painted on them, language including such idioms as "pipes" to denote units of distance, and social stratification based in part upon one's skill with a canoe[43]. At the top were the guides who were responsible for the navigation and the safe passage of a brigade of canoes. Canoemen came in three grades, depending in descending order on whether they were steering from the stern, working the bow or occupying a space in the middle. *La creme de la creme* were *les hommes du nord* or the *hivernants* who unlike the *mangeurs de lard* wintered in the great north.

In addition to being great canoemen, they took pride in their ability to carry immense loads over difficult portages and in overcoming all hardships on the road. In every respect they earned a reputation as great travellers or *voyageurs*.

Their relationships with the Indians proved both an advantage and a disadvantage. Many if not most of them acquired Indian wives *a la façon du pays*[44]. Allying them-

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[43]Grace Lee Nute, *The Voyageur* (St. Paul, 1955).

[44]Sylvia Van Kirk, "'The Custom of the Country'", An Examination of Fur Trade Marriage Practices," (Paper read at the Canadian Historical Association Conference, 1974).

selves in this way with Indian families helped to cement trading alliances and normally worked to the economic benefit of both parties. In addition, the voyageurs became more familiar with Indian customs and languages and had the advantages of a consort whose many skills were of great assistance in making everyday life more bearable. There were, however, abuses in the practice as well as honest misunderstandings which, like family disputes anywhere, could and did lead to violent quarrels[45]. It was probably partly due to this closeness, which the Hudson's Bay Company tended to interpret as a lack of propriety, that the North West Company's servants suffered occasionally from the violence of the Indians, while the English company's servants had never been attacked up to 1786[46].

Perhaps the greatest weakness of the voyageurs as servants lay in the fact that they could rarely be trusted with responsibilities exceeding the normal pattern of their lives. Umphreville echoed a common prejudice in complaining that they could not be trusted with property or goods, nor could their loyalty be taken for granted[47]. Assuming that these accusations were not

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[45]Ibid., 15-16. After 1800 there was increasing tendency to marry Metis girls, a trend that Ms. Van Kirk feels was partly in response to growing violence between traders and Indians.

[46]Edward Umphreville was one writer who made this observation in Wallace, *The Present State of Hudson's Bay* by Edward Umphreville, 110.

[47]Ibid., 110-111.

groundless the explanation probably lay in their outlook on life and in the treatment they received from their employers. Their existence was one governed in many ways by a proud tradition which included a strong moral sense of what could rightly be expected of them. Extra duty was regarded as lying outside of their responsibility and they strongly resisted it. The tasks they recognized as being valid were invariably done with dispatch. H. A. Innis has suggested that disputes were rare but indicated that morale was low in the 1780's and 1790's[48].

The substantial social gulf which was maintained between the *engagé* and the *commis* was probably a factor in weakening any feeling for a community of interest. As the voyageur could never hope to rise to any position higher than guide or interpreter, and very few could hope for even that, there was little incentive for ambition to rise above his class. Financial irresponsibility was encouraged by enticing the men to spend all of their wages on necessary and luxury goods available through the Company at inflated prices. In this way, the Company's wage bill was greatly reduced thereby improving their profit picture. Despite all of these factors, the voyageurs did have a strong sense of loyalty and responsibility towards each other and their work which stemmed from the *esprit*

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[48]Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada*, 241-242.

de corps inspired by their unique culture.

Separated from the French-Canadian voyageur by a wide cultural and social gap were the Bourgeois, a term which could include clerks, traders and wintering partners.

Unlike their counterparts in the Hudson's Bay Company they maintained a strict social distance from their men[49]. Perhaps this was inevitable given the great difference in their backgrounds and prevailing views of master-servant relations. The fur trade system as developed by the Canadian traders tended to institutionalize the separation, despite (or perhaps in response to) the physical conditions which tended to bring them together. The Bourgeois was treated almost like an oriental potentate while voyaging, maintained his separate mess and quarters and generally avoided all social intercourse with his men[50].

In 1785-86 there were three Canadian companies vying for the trade on the Saskatchewan. The key personnel involved were William Holmes, partner of the North West Company responsible for their *Forts des prairies;* Edward Umphreville, a former officer in the Hudson's Bay

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[49]In some ways this might have been advantageous in the maintenance of discipline. In many ways the Canadian fur trade society was analogous to a military society.

[50]Tyrrell, *Journals of Hearne and Turnor*, pages 253-254.

Company who was now Holmes' chief lieutenant; Peter Pangman, partner in the Gregory-McLeod concern with responsibility for their operations in the Saskatchewan district; and Donald McKay, wintering partner in the partnership of McKay-Shaw.

William Holmes[51] was a native of Ireland who came to Montreal a few years after the conquest. It is not known when he first became involved in the fur trade but he first came to the Saskatchewan in 1774 and five years later was one of the partners in the first North West Company. He was a partner in successive agreements and apparently held one share in the Agreement of 1784[52]. He had the reputation of being a fierce competitor and was not beyond using subterfuge or threats to further his interests. He had directly opposed Tomison for a decade and they seem to have regarded each other with respect[53].

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[51]W. S. Wallace, editor, *Documents Relating to the North West Company* (Toronto, 1934), 458.

[52]The North West Company partnership agreement of 1784 has been reconstructed in H. A. Innis, "The North West Company," *Canadian Historical Review*, VIII (1927), 308-321. Innis concluded that there were 16 shares in the partnership held in the following way:

Simon McTavish	3 shares
B.and J. Frobisher	3 shares
George McBeath	2 shares
Robert Grant	2 shares
Patrick Small	2 shares
Nicholas Montour	2 shares
Peter Pond	1 share
William Holmes	1 share

[53]H.B.A., B121/a/2, Manchester House Journal, May 21, 1788.

Edward Umphreville[54] began his fur trade career as a writer for the Hudson's Bay Company at Severn, where he served under Andrew Graham. He was moved to York Factory in 1774 where he stayed until taken prisoner by the French in 1782. During his service to the Company he helped to draw up plans for the establishment of an inland trading system and was apparently well regarded. When he left the Company after being released by the French he harboured great bitterness against it which he expressed in the first part of his book on *The Present State of Hudson's Bay*[55]. This probably arose primarily from the decision by the Company to cease paying all of the men who were captured as of the day of their capture. Although within their legal rights this was not a wise action on their part as it alienated the men to no good purpose.

Being a man of action, Umphreville offered his services to the North West Company which readily accepted him. After surveying for a new route to replace the Grand Portage in case the Americans should bar the Canadians from using it, Umphreville went into the interior with William Holmes, spending the winters of 1784-5 and 1785-6 on the North Saskatchewan River where he took great delight in making life difficult for his former friend and col-

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[54]Wallace, *The Present State of Hudson's Bay* by Edward Umphreville, ix to xv.

[55]Ibid., 1-71.

league, William Tomison.

Peter Pangman[56] was a Yankee of German extraction who had a very long experience in the fur trade. As early as 1767 he was trading on the Mississippi in partnership with James Finlay from Montreal who the following year pioneered in the expansion of the trade to the Saskatchewan River. In 1771 he transferred his energies to the Assiniboine River and in 1774 moved to the Saskatchewan. It was while he was on the Assiniboine that he went to York Fort with a canoe load of furs hoping to make arrangements to have them shipped out. For his pains his furs were seized and the only thing he got in return was a feeling of bitterness against the Company which appears to have coloured all of his subsequent dealings with it.

On the Saskatchewan River, Pangman seems to have been frequently at odds with the other Canadian traders although he was technically included within some of the combinations and copartnerships which operated there. It was probably for this reason that he was excluded from the Agreement of 1784. Not content to be excluded from the trade, Pangman set out to convince some excluded Montreal merchants to support him and ultimately played a major role in the organization of the partnership of John

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[56]Wallace, *Documents Relating to the North West Company*, 490-491. A. J. Van den Bergh, "Pedlar Pangman of the Saskatchewan," (Manuscript in possession of the author, 1963).

Gregory and Normand McLeod[57]. As wintering partner in charge of the Saskatchewan district he set out in the fall of 1785 to mount a serious and effective opposition to the North West Company.

Donald McKay[58] appeared on the Saskatchewan River for the first time in the fall of 1785. A Highlander and a former army officer, possibly a veteran of the American War, he appears to have been new to the fur trade although his partner, Alexander Shaw, was an experienced trader in the Nipigon area. McKay was essentially an unknown quantity but his daring in attempting to take on two established companies and one well-funded new company, all manned and directed by experienced personnel, tends to fit in with the character and personality which later earned him the sobriquet "mad McKay".

Donald McKay was the first trader to establish

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[57]Peter Pangman had been excluded in the original North West Company Agreement reached in Monteal in the winter of 1783-84. In company with Peter Pond, who was dissatisfied with his share, Pangman had gone to Montreal in the summer of 1784 with the intent of founding a rival company. Pond was reconciled to his share in the North West Company, but Pangman persisted and found support from John Gregory, an experienced merchant-outfitter who had also been excluded. The Gregory-McLeod company included the following partners: John Gregory, Normand McLeod, Peter Pangman, Alexander Mackenzie and John Ross. Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company*, II, 118-122; Alexander Mackenzie in W. K. Lamb, editor, *The Journals and Letters of Sir Alexander Mackenzie* (Cambridge, 1970), 77-78.

[58]This biographical sketch is based on scattered references in the following: G. C. Davidson, *The North West Company* (New York, 1967); L. F. R. Masson, *Les Bourgeois de la Compagnie du Nord-Ouest* (Quebec, 1889-90); Morton, "A History of the Canadian West to 1870-71; and H.B.A., B121/a/1, Manchester House Journal, 1786-87.

himself on Pine Island. He had come in from Grand Portage in the fall of 1785 with a small outfit worth £500 including 200 gallons of spirits[59]. Arriving late in the fall he was frozen in about 100 miles above Cumberland House where he was found by some of the Hudson's Bay Company men in the middle of the winter, almost starved "having sent the rest of his men away in search of Indians."[60] As a result he traded only three packs of furs and in the spring proceeded up the river in search of a proper location for a trading post. The site he chose was on Pine Island, some fifty miles upstream from the nearest post, the one built by William Holmes the year before at the Battle River (see Figure 5).

Being the first to arrive so far up the river gave him certain advantages in that he was in a good position to give out credits and attempt to tie the Indians to his interest. This was a costly business, however, as summer furs were not of good quality, but it was difficult to refuse them when trying to win new customers away from their established loyalties. Nevertheless, McKay's resources were not inconsiderable as most of his stock remained and a further supply worth £1500 was on its way inland[61].

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[59]Davidson, 25.

[60]H.B.A. B87/a/8, Hudson House Journal, January 3, 1786.

[61]Davidson, 26.

Figure 5. Legend

1. Churchill Fort
2. York Fort
3. Severn Fort
4. Gordon House
5. Chatham House
6. Sipiwesk Lake House
7. Swan River House
8. Cumberland House
9. Lower Nipawi
10. South Branch House
11. Sturgeon River posts
12. Hudson House
13. Battle River Post
14. Pine Island
15. Umphreville's Post
16. Fort George--Buckingham House
17. Moose Lake Post
18. Isle a la Crosse
19. Fort of the Forks
20. Pond's Athabasca House
21. Fort Chipewyan

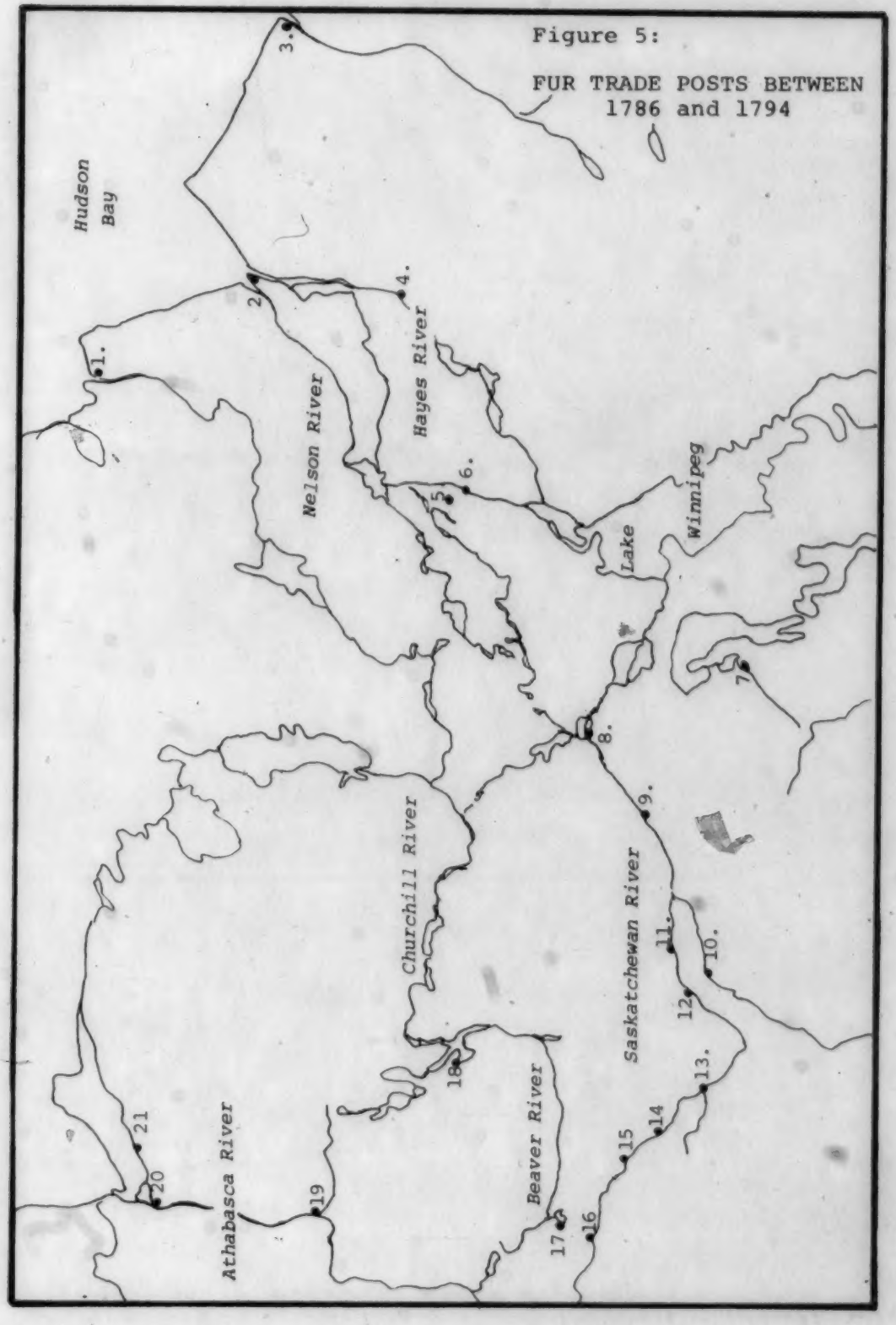

Figure 5:

FUR TRADE POSTS BETWEEN
1786 and 1794

Remembering the assistance that he had received from the men of the Hudson's Bay Company the previous winter, McKay sent word after he was well established to William Walker, summer master at Hudson House, inviting him "to build alongside of him before the other traders' arrival."[62] Apparently he viewed the Englishmen as potential allies in the coming competitive battle with the other Canadian concerns.

Walker took the initiative and sent one of his men, Magnus Spence Sr.[63] to fell some timber and stake out a claim on the island. A few weeks later he followed this up by sending the well-travelled Isaac Batt[64] to return to the "Slave Indian country . . . [to] give them the news where we are to reside."[65] In taking these steps

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[62]H.B.A., B87/a/9 Hudson House Journal, August 17, 1786. There is some evidence that this move had been discussed with William Tomison in the spring. H.B.A., B121/a/1, Manchester House Journal, November 1, 1786.

[63]Magnus Spence was a young hand from the parish of Burray in Orkney who had joined the Company in 1783. Described by Tomison as a good labourer but a bad canoeman, he had been left inland to spend the summer at Hudson House. H.B.A., B239/f/1, York Factory Lists of Servants.

[64]Isaac Batt had had a lengthy career with the Hudson's Bay Company beginning in 1754. Between 1758 and 1773 he had made numerous inland journeys and was without doubt the most experienced inland traveller in the employ of the Company. His defection to the Canadian trader, Charles Paterson, had been a blow to the Company in 1775 when they were struggling to establish Cumberland House on a firm footing. After he returned to the Company in 1777, he remained at the inland posts, spending most of the time living with his family among the Indians. Batt's early career is summarized in Tyrrell, *Journals of Hearne and Turnor*, 5.

[65]H.B.A., B87/a/9, Hudson House Journal, September 15, 1786.

he was following plans for expansion already proposed by Humphrey Marten and, as it was to prove, anticipating the instructions of the York Factory Council.

In the spring of 1786 they still only had two posts inland from York Fort, Cumberland House which had been established in 1774 and the second Hudson House which was constructed on the North Saskatchewan River in 1779. The trading season of 1781-82 had dealt the Company such a heavy loss that it had had to suspend the payment of dividends for the first time in many years. The smallpox epidemic which had raged in the parkland area in the winter of 1781-82 had killed many of the Company's customers and caused temporary dislocation of their trading and provisioning arrangements but the chief cause of their distress had been the capture of Churchill and York Fort by Lapérouse in the summer of 1782. Even though one of the Company's ships slipped away with most of the furs, the prestige of the Company was damaged in the eyes of the Indians and for the 1783-84 trading season, the inland posts were almost destitute of trading goods because of the late arrival of the ships sent out to re-establish the bay-side forts[66].

Despite their problems the Hudson's Bay Company was determined to make up lost ground and substantial

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[66]Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company*, II, 112-115.

increases were made in manpower and the investment in trade goods with the intention of expanding the inland operations at York Factory[67]. Expansion inland was slow to come, however, due to shortages of experienced men and canoes. In 1785 the need to expand became critical as the North West Company and the Gregory-McLeod partnership began their contest for control of the Northwest trade.

The North West Company had a decided logistical advantage and it was clearly evidenced on the North Saskatchewan River in 1785-86. Taking advantage of their experience in the navigation of the river systems of the Northwest they had little difficulty in arriving on the Saskatchewan well ahead of their new rivals. William Holmes pushed on up the river to establish his main post at the Battle River, well above any of the other posts then occupied. During the summer his men had already established another post on the South Saskatchewan River about 40 miles above its juncture with the north branch. The first post was well situated to intercept the trade of all of the western Indians, whose trade in furs was very valuable, while the post on the south branch cut off trade coming in to Hudson House from the south and the east and

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[67]The total value of goods at York Factory in 1784 was £9,741 compared with an average of £6,273 between 1774 and 1782. H.B.A., A18/1-2, Annual Balance Sheets. A similar increase in manpower was promised. H.B.A., A6/13, London Correspondence Outward, Letter to Humphrey Marten, May 25, 1783.

was particularly suited for trade with the Assiniboine Indians for both furs and provisions.

When Peter Pangman arrived he had little choice but to follow the lead of the Nor'westers. Accordingly he established his main post on the south branch and sent a small party of his men to set up camp close by Holmes' post.

The two Canadian companies had between them almost 200 men[68] on the Saskatchewan and large stocks of trade goods, particularly liquor. The North West Company as a whole had shipped to Grand Portage goods worth £20,500 including 6,000 gallons of rum whereas Gregory and McLeod had sent a total of £5,625 in goods including 750 gallons of rum[69]. In opposition to this the Hudson's Bay Company had fewer than 50 men inland (see Table 2), and less than £10,000 worth of goods in the entire York Factory[70]. In 1785, they had imported 2,028 gallons of English brandy[71].

Delayed in his return to Hudson House because of the late arrival of the ship that summer and an early freeze-up, Tomison was unable to take any action to counter the Canadian moves and he remained at Hudson House. By so

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[68]H.B.A. B87/a/8, Hudson House Journal, Letter from William Tomison to George Hudson, January 11, 1786.

[69]Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada*, 253.

[70]H.B.A., A/18/1, Annual Balance Sheet, 1785.

[71]H.B.A., B239/ee/1, York Factory Ship Invoices, 1785.

Table 2:

NUMBER OF MEN EMPLOYED BY THE HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY AT THE SASKATCHEWAN RIVER POSTS[1]

Year	1785	1786	1787	1788	1789	1790	1791	1792	1793
Number at Manchester House	--	34	40	43	45	46	42	14	12
Total Number on Saskatchewan River	48	62	71	68	75	69	74	80	70

[1] Based on H.B.A., B239/f/1, York Factory List of Servants, and B239/a/86-95, York Factory Journals.

doing he probably escaped being directly involved in the bitter struggle that broke out between Pangman and Holmes, especially at the Battle River. Displays of force and tactics of intimidation were used by Holmes to protect his trade, but Pangman's men persisted and in the end won a share of the trade[72].

The main result of the increased rivalry seems to have been greatly increased costs and low returns for all of the companies involved. There is no direct evidence concerning the actual returns of the North West Company on the Saskatchewan but it is likely they got the lion's share although the overall returns of the Company were probably not sufficient for a profit, assuming returns of £30,000 (see Figure 1). Similar problems exist in esti-

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[72] H.B.A., B87/a/8, Hudson House Journal, May 6, 1786.

mating the success of Peter Pangman, but it is highly unlikely that he did very well opposing the well-established companies after an absence of two seasons and it is quite certain that the Gregory-McLeod partnership as a whole suffered heavy losses[73]. The records of the Hudson's Bay Company give a fuller picture of their situation in the spring of 1786. With total returns from their inland posts of only 8,957 MB (see Table 3) they still had not been able to regain the levels which they had achieved before 1781 when returns reached the level of 15,000 MB[74].

At the end of September, Robert Longmoor arrived at Hudson House with a convoy of twelve canoes, a commission appointing him to be inland factor in the place of William Tomison and instructions to build a new upper house. In appointing Longmoor to replace William Tomison, who had requested leave to return home, Humphrey Marten and the York Factory Council acted contrary to the decision already made in London that Longmoor was to head up a concerted effort to re-establish the inland trade in the Churchill district. Presumably the decision was based on Marten's conviction that William Walker was not sufficient-

[73]They were reported to have lost over £10,000 in their first two years. H.B.A., B121/a/2, Manchester House Journal, September 27, 1787.

[74]The actual returns were 15,332 MB according to H.B.A., A11/115, London Inward Correspondence from York Factory, Letter from Humphrey Marten and the York Factory Council, September 1, 1781.

Table 3:

FUR RETURNS FOR THE HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY[1]

Year[2]	1785	1786	1787	1788	1789	1790	1791	1792
Inland Fur Returns in MB[3]	8,960	11,960	14,540	16,260	12,350[4]	15,430[5]	17,040	18,110
York Factory Fur Returns in MB[3]	20,230	30,610	33,480	34,920	32,400	39,800	41,650[6]	50,000

[1]Based on entries in H.B.A., A11/116-117, London Inward Correspondence for York Factory; and B239/b/52-55, York Factory Country Correspondence.

[2]Year indicated is the outfit year.

[3]All figures rounded off to the nearest 10 MB

[4]Approximately 4,000 MB were left behind at Cumberland House. H.B.A., A11/117, London Inward Correspondence from York Factory, Letter from York Factory Council, September 4, 1790.

[5]Approximately 6,000 MB remained at Cumberland House. Ibid., Letter from William Tomison, July 22, 1791.

[6]Estimated on the basis of fur sale returns recorded in H.B.A., A15/15, Grand Journals.

ly steady and George Hudson not sufficiently experienced for the job[75].

After being named to replace Tomison, Longmoor wrote a lengthy letter to the Governor and Committee in London expressing his gratitude and cataloguing his grievances against his former colleague and superior[76]. However

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[75]H.B.A., A11/116, London Inward Correspondence from York Factory, Letter from Humphrey Marten, September 12, 1785.

[76]Ibid., Letter from Robert Longmoor, July 23, 1786.

justified his complaints may have been, Longmoor had declared his independence from his old friend. He came inland ready to make a fresh start and to compete vigorously against the Canadian traders.

When he arrived at Hudson House he took a few days to inspect the site chosen for a new post on the south branch to compete against the Canadian posts there. He left Mitchell Oman[77] in charge of its construction with the young apprectice, David Thompson[78], to act as his writer. With the greater part of the men and goods he then proceeded up the Saskatchewan to the site staked out by Magnus Spence. Arriving on Pine Island on October 12, 1786 he immediately set out to construct his new headquarters which he named Manchester House. Only 17 days later he was able to record in his journal that "the House has come past fear of cold and inclemency of the Weather."[79] Longmoor was in a position to look forward with hope to the coming year as the Company was no longer hedged in by the

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[77]Mitchell Oman was a labourer from Stromness in Orkney who had joined the Company in 1771. According to Thompson, "He had no education, but a fine manly powerful man of tenacious memory and high moral qualities, and much respected by the Indians and whose language he had acquired." Glover, *David Thompson's Narrative*, 38.

[78]David Thompson had been brought out as an apprentice to the Company in 1784 and was regarded as a very promising youth. After two years at York Factory he had come inland and stayed at Cumberland House in the winter of 1786-87 to assist George Hudson. Thompson was about 17 years old in 1787.

[79]H.B.A. B121/a/1, Manchester House Journal, October 29, 1786.

Canadians.

The third party to arrive at Pine Island was Peter Pangman. Although he did not personally come to take charge until early in the winter, his men arrived about the same time as did Longmoor's and they constructed a large post near the foot of the island. With permanent posts on Pine Island and the south branch, Pangman would be in a sounder competitive position. It is probable that his means were also enhanced, as his Company had poured another £4,500 worth of goods into the Northwest including 1,600 gallons of rum[80].

The North West Company decided to follow a different strategy. They retained their post at the Battle River and built a new one on the south branch where Nicholas Montour was stationed[81]. In addition, Edward Umphreville was sent upstream to establish a new post above Pine Island[82]. To keep an eye on the activities of the Pine Island traders, he sent a small party to build on the island. One canoe, probably under the command of an interpreter by the name of Champagne, arrived at Pine Is-

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[80]Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada*, 253.

[81]H.B.A., B205/a/1, South Branch House Journal, 1786-87.

[82]H.B.A., B121/a/1, Manchester House Journal, November 2, 1786.

land on October 23[83].

Although the North West Company had only a token presence on the island, the strength of their position cannot be denied. In addition to the small party on Pine Island, they had the other traders bracketed by their posts at Battle River and upstream near Frenchman Butte. The total resources of their three posts were undoubtedly far greater than those of any of their rivals on the island and they had the strategic advantage of being well placed to intercept any Indians coming in to trade with their opponents. They were in the position of being able to adopt this strategy because of their superiority in men and goods. This is demonstrated by the £25,500 worth of goods imported into the country by the North West Company as compared with the £4,500 invested by Gregory-McLeod, and the £1,500 carried in by McKay's men[84].

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[83]Ibid., October 23, 1786.
Champagne was identified on the basis of Fidler's account of the establishment of the posts on Pine Island. H.B.A., E3/1, Journals of Peter Fidler, October 4, 1792.

[84]Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada*, 253.

CHAPTER TWO

THE FIRST YEARS--1786 to 1789

Part 1 The Hudson's Bay Company, 1786-89

On November 2, 1786 William Tomison arrived at Manchester House bearing a commission appointing him to be Chief Inland. Longmoor's appointment had been summarily reversed and Tomison took over as the ranking officer inland and master at Manchester House. The Governor and Committee of the Company in London had ignored Tomison's request to return home. Instead they accepted Humphrey Marten's offer to resign and appointed Tomison to take his place with the proviso that he continue to reside inland. In this position he was to have full powers to allocate men and trading goods as he saw fit "that nothing would be wanting to push on the inland trade with the greatest Vigour."[1] Joseph Colen, who had come out as a writer to Marten the previous year, was appointed as Resi-

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[1]H.B.A., A6/13, London Correspondence Outward, General Letter to Humphrey Marten and the York Fort Council, May, 1786. Further details of Tomison's instructions are contained in a private letter he received from the Governor and Committee. Ibid. A5/2, London Letters Outward, Letter to William Tomison, May 24, 1786.

dent in charge of York Fort during Tomison's sojourns inland[2].

The Company's reasoning was clear. The critical struggle for the control of the trade was taking place inland where the Canadian traders were being met face to face. If the chief officer of York Factory[3] were stationed inland, they argued,

> he may be able to take such Measures & see them properly carried into execution, as may be necessary for increasing the Trade, and promoting the Interest of the Company without waiting for permission or Orders from a Superior at a distance of many hundred Miles.[4]

It was final acknowledgement by the Company that the old policy of trying to induce the Indians to travel long distances to trade at the Bay was a dead letter. The Company was determined to prosecute a vigorous policy inland in hopes that they might yet drive out the Canadian inter-

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[2]Joseph Colen was from London and after only one year at York Fort was given "preference of others of much older Date" when he was appointed Resident. Alice Johnson wrote that this was based on "reasons best known to the London Committee". Clearly he was a man of some experience--he was 32 years old and his correspondence exudes confidence--and he must have had connections as well. The energy and skill that he brought to the reconstruction of York Fort suggests he may have been selected mainly because of experience he may have had in that kind of work as well as clerical skills. A. M. Johnson, ed., *Saskatchewan Journals and Correspondence* (London, 1967), xiii to xiv and xiv note 1.

[3]In this thesis the term York Factory will be used to designate the entire establishment dependent on the bayside depot, which will be referred to as York Fort. The documents tend to use the two terms quite interchangeably.

[4]H.B.A., A6/13, London Correspondence Outward, General letter to Humphrey Marten and Council at York Fort, May 1786.

lopers. In addition to the change in organization, the Governor and Committee were prepared to increase the number of men assigned to the inland trade. They sent out twelve additional men with the instructions that they were to be used inland to bring the establishment there up to 77. This would represent an increase of almost 20% and the new total would be a substantial majority of the compliment of York Factory which numbered 112.[5]

With the larger complement it was to be hoped that a sufficient quantity of goods could be transported inland to meet the Canadian competition. But practical considerations delayed the expansion of the actual inland force and at the same time highlighted the continuing transportation problems of the Company. The new men did not arrive until after the canoes had left for the inland posts. Consequently there were no canoes to carry them inland, even if they had possessed the skill to man them. This they also lacked. Accordingly there were only 62 men inland during 1786-87, including officers[6].

The expansion of trade inland would also require

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[5]In addition to the 77 which were to be assigned to the inland posts, fifteen were allocated for Severn and twenty to York Fort. Ibid. Glover has pointed out that the Company chose not to make too swift a build-up as they recognized that larger numbers could not be absorbed without strain. Glover, *David Thompson's Narrative*, xvii.

[6]The figure of 62 is based on the fact that there were 59 inland in July which was later augmented by three when Tomison returned inland at the end of August with two young hands. H.B.A., B239/a/86, York Factory Journals, July 22, 1786; B239/a/87, York Factory Journals, August 30, 1786.

an adequacy of trade goods, in both quantity and quality. The investment in trade goods at York Factory already constituted the largest amount assigned to any single factory around the Bay[7] but the increase in manpower was not matched by an increase in goods. Indeed, records suggest there was a decrease of about 5% in the total available in the factory[8]. The goods shipped inland were valued at 10,980 MB which was a substantial increase when compared with the returns of 8,960 MB brought down in the spring. Included in their trading inventory was 545 gallons of English brandy. (See Table 4 and Table 5.)

The organizational changes which centered around the appointment of William Tomison appeared to have their desired beneficial effect in the first three years. Tomison's long experience and willingness to exert himself on behalf of the Company worked to the advantage of the Company. Placing authority in his hands did lead to the emphasis on the inland trade that was desired and for a time the initiative appears to have shifted over to a position more favourable to the Hudson's Bay Company. Tomison wrote to the Company in London giving details of the Canadian op-

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[7]H.B.A., A18/2, Annual Balance Sheets. In 1786, York Factory had £8,256 worth of goods in stock compared with £6,132 at Moose Factory, £5,247 at Albany, £2,595 at Churchill, and £2,044 at Eastmain.

[8]Ibid. The book value of goods at York Factory fell from £8,720 at September 30, 1785 to £8,256 at September 30, 1786.

Table 4:

VALUE OF TRADE GOODS SENT INLAND FROM YORK FACTORY[1]

Year	1786	1787	1788	1789	1790[2]	1791	1792	1793
Trade goods in MB	10,980	12,600	13,860	11,910	16,780	19,390	17,380	24,570
Approximate Value in £ Sterling[3]	2,610	3,000	3,300	2,840	4,000	4,620	4,140	5,850

[1]Based on H.B.A., B239/d/76-98, York Factory Account Books. All values are rounded off to the nearest 10 units.

[2]Beginning in 1790 the quantities include goods supplied to the Swan River and Nelson River posts as well as the Saskatchewan River posts.

[3]Based on a factor of 4.2 MB = £1 Sterling. This would represent approximately the costs of the goods landed at York Factory including warehouse charges and shipping costs as based on entries in H.B.A., A15/13-15, Grand Journals.

Table 5:

QUANTITIES OF SELECTED TRADE ITEMS SENT INLAND FROM YORK FACTORY[1]

Items	1786	1787	1788	1789	1790[2]	1791	1792	1793
Blanket cloth (yd)	31	66	50	21	107	81	60	112
Brandy (gal)	545	622	700	624	914	738	884	1,360[3]
Guns (#)	136	152	144	112	142	198	185	208
Hatchets (#)	278	170	262	274	406	462	400	804
Powder (lb.)	855	854	1,205	1,181	1,740	1,545	1,643	1,659
Tobacco (lb.)	1,421	1,091	1,115	1,520	945	3,587	2,448	1,980

[1]Based on York Factory Accounts, H.B.A., B239/d/76-98. Original accounts were computed in terms of MB valuations and quantities have been calculated using the following valuations based on the York Factory Standard of Trade.

Blanket cloth	1 yd.	= 6 MB.
Brandy	1 gal.	= 4 MB.
Guns (3½ ft.)	1	= 11 MB.
Hatchets	2	= 1 MB.
Powder	1½ lb.	= 1 MB.
Tobacco, Brazil	1 lb.	= 1 MB.

[2]Beginning in 1790, the figures include goods provided to the Swan River and Nelson River posts.

[3]Beginning in 1793 a large percentage of the brandy had been double-distilled at York Factory.

eration and detailing a plan of action which he felt would recover the Company's decaying position[9]. The key organizational change that he instituted was to insist that the goods required for the inland trade would be all packed and ready to go upon the arrival of the canoes in June. This would save as much as three weeks in turn-around time and ensure that they would arrive at their inland posts well before the Canadians. He also emphasized that practical access to the Athabasca country could only be obtained via Cumberland House which, he argued,

> is the only Place I know to braunch out another Settlement to that Part of the country on acc't of Provisions which must be Procured from the buffalo Country.[10]

The most serious difficulty that William Tomison had to face was the problem of manpower and employee relations. The total recruitment year by year seemed generous in the eyes of the Company as their records showed an increase in the Inland complement from 65 in 1785-86 to 77 in 1786-87, 85 in 1787-88 and 95 in 1788-89.[11] As we have seen the increase in manpower was not immediately reflected in the actual numbers employed inland. In fact, after 1787 they were hardly reflected at all as the totals rose from 48 in 1785-86 to 62 in 1786-87 to 71 in 1787-88,

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[9]H.B.A., A11/116, London Inward Correspondence from York Factory, Letter from William Tomison, August 24, 1786.

[10]Ibid.

[11]H.B.A., A6/13 and A6/14, London Correspondence Outward.

falling back to 68 in 1788-89 (see Table 2). The principal reasons for the growing discrepancy between the two sets of figures were the poor quality of many of the recruits which made them unfit for inland service; disease and accidents both inland and at the Bay; and growing dissatisfaction among the Orkney servants which led to a larger than usual turnover.

There were repeated complaints by William Tomison, backed up by Joseph Colen and other officers at York Factory, that too many of the men being brought out from the Orkneys were "Invalides instead of Labourious men fit for duty."[12] The blame was placed squarely on the recruiting system used in the Orkneys. In 1787, Tomison complained that

> So little attention is Paid to Character and abilities--[that] the Reccommendations of Mr. Robert Sanderson and the Rev'd Mr. Falconer is sufficient to send any man into this Countary . . . To repeat the declarations of the Poor men who came out last season of the large Presents they were obliged to make before their advance money was paid them at Stromness and part of it stoped, would be a recital of infamous impositions.[13]

Further details were provided by Colen in the summer of 1789. He wrote that Robert Sandison was the principal culprit in a system whereby valuable presents in the form

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[12]H.B.A., A11/116, London Inward Correspondence from York Factory, Letter from William Tomison, July 16, 1787.

[13]Ibid.

of sheep, fowl, eggs and money were exacted from prospective applicants with the positions going to those that made the greatest presents. The power held by the two men was based on their prestige in the community. As explained by Colen;

> These two Persons mentioned are Elders (as is called) in the Kirk, have great sway over the ignorant poor, that few, very few undertake any matter of consequence, without consulting them; and when a poor fellow wishes to come into this Country, and happens to apply to either, and cannot afford a present suitable at the time, they are told "no men are wanted this Year--and that they cannot undertake the speaking to the Captains in their favour until they are paid for their trouble"--this is evident that no regard is paid to Character or abilities by the many useless men that make the number at this place.[14]

Colen's recommendation was that the Company ought to appoint an agent at Stromness who would be responsible for all hiring. The proposed change was made within a few years with the appointment of David Geddes as agent in Stromness[15].

Disease and accidents also took their toll and effectively limited the number of able men available for inland service. In the first year at Manchester House the men appear to have been remarkably healthy. No illness was recorded and only three suffered injuries which kept

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[14]H.B.A., B239/a/89, York Factory Journals, July 18, 1789.

[15]Glover, *David Thompson's Narrative*, 6, n.1; and H.B.A. A6/15, London Correspondence Outward, Letter to Joseph Colen and the York Fort Council, May 30, 1793.

them from their regular duties[16]. The second year was a less happy one: On the voyage in from York Fort, two men were accidentally killed. William Saunders, an experienced hand, died in an accident with a loaded gun a few days after leaving the Bay[17] and a few weeks later John Linkletter, a young man on his first inland voyage, was lost in a canoe accident at the "Great Falls"[18]. By the time the canoes arrived at Cumberland House three more of the men were out of commission as a result of sprains or other leg injuries and had to be left there[19]. When they reached Manchester Tomison found that William Rich had fractured his arm in a fall from his horse and was an invalid for the remainder of the year[20]. Once at Manchester House the level of health improved. Only two men suffered relatively minor injuries although one of them, John Flett, was,

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[16]H.B.A., B121/a/1, Manchester House Journal, 1786-87.

[17]H.B.A., B121/a/2, Manchester House Journal, August 10, 1787. William Saunders was from Scapa on the mainland of Orkney and had joined the Company as a labourer in 1783. H.B.A., A32/1, Servants Contracts.

[18]Ibid., August 28, 1787. John Linkletter came from the parish of Birsay in the Orkney Islands. He was about 25 years old when he joined the Company in 1785. H.B.A., A32/2, Servants Contracts.

[19]Ibid., September 5, 1787.

[20]Ibid., September 26, 1787. William Rich had come inland for the first time in 1786. About 27 years old in 1787 he came from the parish of Sandwick on the mainland of Orkney and had joined the Company in 1785. H.B.A., A32/2, Servants' Contracts; and H.B.A., B239/f/1, York Factory Lists of Servants.

in addition, laid up for most of the winter with the "yellow jaundice"[21]. It is hard to know whether his recovery was aided or delayed by his treatment which consisted of "about 25 vomits and upwards of 30 doses of physic and has often been bled"[22].

This flurry of illness and accidents convinced Tomison that a surgeon was required inland. Not only would it give the men "content" and thereby put an end to "much Murmering" but "it would draw many natives to the settlements and the returns of furs would soon more than be able to repay the expence."[23] The winter of 1788-89 emphasized the need for a qualified medical man. Just before Christmas, David Thompson was pinned between a sled loaded with meat and a tree while descending the south bank of the river close by the fort. In this accident he suffered a

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[21]John Flett was ill from October 29, 1787 until April 28, 1788. H.B.A., B121/a/2, Manchester House Journal, 1787-88. John Flett was from the parish of Firth in Orkney, and had been hired in 1782 as a labourer at the age of 18. Shortly after arriving at York Fort he had been captured by the French and carried off as a prisoner. After being released in London in 1783 he was rehired for a period of five years. H.B.A., A32/1 and A32/3, Servants Contracts and B239/f/1, York Factory Lists of Servants.

[22]Ibid., April 28, 1788.

[23]H.B.A., A11/117, London Inward Correspondence from York Factory, joint letter from William Tomison and Joseph Colen, July 19, 1788.

serious fracture to his leg[24]. Tomison himself set the fracture and put the leg in splints but felt very concerned about his adequacy writing in his journal that night that "such accidents would require a more skillful person."[25] The injury was very slow in healing and Thompson suffered several relapses. As a result he was still bedridden when it came time to leave for York Factory in the spring and Thompson, at his own insistence, was carried along, presumably in the hope that proper medical attention could be received from the surgeon there. He had to be left at Cumberland House, however, as the travelling had proved to be too hard on him.

The winter of 1788-89 proved to be a disastrous one for disease as well, both at Manchester House and at the Bay. William Tomison himself had been unwell through much of the summer and fall of 1788, suffering from a "severe cold" which lingered on in such a way that he feared it might lead to a "Consumated state" and he accordingly requested leave to return to England in the summer of 1789[26]. That winter at least four of his men suffered

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[24]H.B.A., B121/a/3, Manchester House Journals, December 23, 1788.

[25]Ibid. Tomison was obviously deeply concerned about the condition of his young charge and there are frequent references in his journals to his progress through the remainder of the winter. Many years later, Thompson recalled with gratitude how "Mr. Tomison behaved with the tenderness of a father to me." Glover, *David Thompson's Narrative*, 55.

[26]H.B.A., A11/117, London Inward Correspondence from York Factory, Letter from William Tomison, July 20, 1788.

from a disease which had as one of its symptoms the "Bloody Flux". All of them eventually recovered except for poor Thomas Hay whose condition steadily deteriorated until he lapsed into a coma and died[27].

The illnesses, even more than the ever-present danger of accident, brought home to the men their helplessness in the face of such an enemy. What medicines they had were of little use for they lacked instruction in their use[28]. Simple febrifuges, emetics and cathartics were available to them and along with the practice of bleeding constituted their entire arsenal of medical treatments. In response to the flux, for example, they resorted to the use of powdered cherries and "Dr. James Powder", the latter as it was the only medicine for which they had instructions[29].

Despite the danger of accident, especially on the rivers, life at the inland posts appears to have been healthier than at the Bay. Serious disease was rare and the loss of only one man out of a population of over 30 in three years was not excessive. The relative youth of the men, the outdoor life they led, and their diet of

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[27]H.B.A., B121/a/3, Manchester House Journals, May 7, 1789. Thomas Hay, from Orphir, had joined the Company in 1785. He had served inland at Manchester House since 1786. H.B.A., B239/f/1, York Factory Lists of Servants.

[28]Ibid., April 3, 1789.

[29]Ibid., April 13, 1789.

fresh meat were probably all major factors. Life at the Bay, despite the fact that it was more settled and comfortable, could be less healthful. This was demonstrated in the winter of 1788-89 when York Fort was ravaged once again by a severe epidemic of scurvy. Most of the men there were disabled by it, some permanently, and many of the young recruits intended for inland service were rendered incapable of undertaking it[30].

The presence of a surgeon at York Fort was clearly not any guarantee of good health. It is probable that the main value of having a medical man assigned to the inland posts would have been in the improvement of employee morale. The feeling of helplessness which the men felt in the face of serious disease would have been at least partially allayed and they would have felt less cut off from the normal comforts of a civilized society.

Any improvement in morale would have been welcome to Tomison and the other officers of the Company as they were conscious of facing a serious crisis in employee-employer relations which constituted the most serious barrier to a solution of the manpower problem.

The root of the problem appears to have been money, although certain other factors that might be considered fringe benefits were also involved. For almost

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[30]H.B.A., A11/117, London Inward Correspondence from York Factory, General letter from the York Fort Council, September 8, 1789.

a century, the Hudson's Bay Company had maintained the same level of wages for the labouring personnel brought in from the Orkneys. For many years the first contract had been set at £6 per annum for five years to commence upon arrival at the Bay and to cease upon leaving the Bay. Subsequent contracts were usually shorter and allowed for a gradual increase in irregular increments up to £20 or even £25 per annum for experienced inland servants.

Due to the pressing need for men which had plagued the Company since it had first embarked on the establishment of inland posts, the men had succeeded, with the support of officers like William Tomison and Humphrey Marten, in having certain concessions granted to the inland servants. All inland servants earning less than £10 per annum received a bounty of 40 s. or £2. The men were allowed to make their wishes known, and in many cases they received more generous treatment in second and subsequent contracts than had been the norm in previous years. Each case was considered individually and the inevitable result was that there developed a considerable differential in wage level between individuals with similar service records. A random examination of the records of eight labourers who entered their first contract between 1778 and 1783 showed that their wage level in their sixth year of employment varied from £10 to £15 and in

the eighth year, £14 to £18[31]. In a close community like that in which these men lived and worked, these differences must have been known. As a result, the situation generated requests for increases by those at the lower levels.

Inland servants were also able to avail themselves of other major sources of income not equally available to the servants along the Bay. In order to encourage the building of canoes the Company had agreed to allow the payment of bounties of 40 shillings for the building of canoes. These bounties as well as the bounties for living inland were usually paid in the form of goods which could be taken up at the store in York Fort. In the same way they were able to receive payment for furs they obtained through their own hunting and trapping. The goods that they obtained were frequently greatly in excess of those required for their own use, and they formed the basic stock which could be used in a flourishing private or unofficial trade. According to Joseph Colen, this constituted "The chief part of the Trade from Inland especially from the Upper Settlements,"[32] although he admitted he was basing this on hearsay evidence. In any event it was obviously very considerable and allowed many of the more experienced inland servants to enjoy a standard of living much higher than would

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[31]H.B.A., B239/f/1, York Factory Lists of Servants.

[32]H.B.A., A11/117, London Inward Correspondence from York Factory, Letter from Joseph Colen, August 29, 1788.

be suggested by considering only their nominal wage rates.

The perquisites of private trade were generally those of the more experienced men only and most of the men were not able to benefit from it. They looked instead to an improvement in the official wages. In 1785, Humphrey Marten had warned London that for the sake of a few pounds' saving by the Company, the men were dissatisfied and were "well known" to have formed a combination to seek higher wages[33]. By the summer of 1787 this combination had grown strong enough to place Tomison and the York Factory Council in a very difficult position. Many of the experienced men, whose contracts were at an end, refused to accept the terms that the Company was willing to offer[34]. Tomison had little room in which to manouvre as he was operating under specific instructions to the effect that he was not to negotiate with the employees or vary the Company's terms in any way[35]. With great difficulty, all of the

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[33]H.B.A., A11/116, London Inward Correspondence from York Factory, Letter from Humphrey Marten, September 12, 1785.

[34]H.B.A., B239/a/87, York Factory Journals, July 3-11, 1787. According to the York Factory Lists of Servants (H.B.A., B239/f/1), 15 inland servants had reached the end of their contracts. Most were experienced men who had served at least two contract periods. In an attempt to remove differentials between men of equivalent experience, the Company offered terms of £14 for three years for second contracts and £20 for three years for third contracts to men who were steersmen. Most of the men were united in demanding £14 for two years on second contract and £25 for two years on the third contract.

[35]H.B.A., A5/2, London Letters Outward, Letter to William Tomison, May 24, 1786.

holdouts were convinced to return inland[36]. A majority of these men had signed no contracts, presumably on the understanding that their demands would be considered by the Company[37]. In one instance a contract was signed which embodied terms which exceeded those offered by the Company[38]. One returned inland only after "he had various presents made him,"[39] while another did so following the promise he would be paid for one year at the rate he was requesting[40]. Only four actually signed new contracts on the Company's terms. Everyone must have been aware that the issue had only been postponed for another year and would be even more acute the following summer when a larger number of contracts came to an end and those who re-

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[36]Two remained at York Factory until the arrival of the ship. One of these returned inland when Colen agreed to his terms by promising him a gratuity of £5 a year for signing on the Company's terms. The other finally agreed to the terms offered. One man, James Banks, remained at York Factory where he remained for another six years as a hunter. H.B.A., B239/f/1, York Factory Lists of Servants.

[37]Nine of the fourteen men who returned inland did so without signing contracts. Ibid.

[38]John Kirkness was given a second contract of £15 per year for four years instead of the standard contract of £14 for three years. Ibid. John Kirkness came from Sandwick and had joined the Company in 1782. He was classed as labourer and tailor.

[39]William Flett Sr. Ibid. Flett was from Grimbister in the parish of Firth and had joined the Company in 1773. He had served inland continuously since 1774. Tyrrell, *Journals of Hearne and Turnor*, 111 n.4.

[40]Andrew Davey. H.B.A., B239/f/1, York Factory Lists of Servants. Andrew Davey was from the parish of Firth and had joined the Company in 1782.

turned inland without contracts would be free to leave[41].

Faced with what they considered to be an illegal combination of servants, whose actions would, "if not timely Prevented become a great Evil"[42], the Governor and Committee in London were determined to take a strong stand. They had already decided that Tomison was not to be given the same discretionary powers that Marten had enjoyed. Tomison was reminded once again that he must not depart from the specified terms. In their determination that no servants should be in a position to dictate terms they ordered Tomison to send a list of those who were leaders in the combination so that they might recall them. Indeed they went so far as to suggest that "The recalling ten, twelve, fourteen of the most forward in these combinations cannot amongst 85 men have any material effect in injuring our trade."[43] These instructions placed Tomison in a very awkward position as he was well aware that the loss of that many skilled canoemen, when he was already seriously understaffed, would be very serious.

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[41]Twenty of the men would be at the end of their contracts in 1788. Ibid. The contracts stipulated that the men could be required to stay one additional year at the same rate if they gave inadequate notice of intention to leave. The nine men who had not signed contracts were in effect serving this additional year and would be free to leave at the end of it.

[42]H.B.A., A11/116, London Correspondence Inward from York Factory, Letter from William Tomison, July 16, 1787.

[43]H.B.A., A5/2, London Letters Outward, Letter to William Tomison, May 23, 1787.

In the summer of 1788, the men were even more united in standing out for better terms. Once again the men were demanding £14 per year for two years on second contract and £25 per year for two years on the third and subsequent contracts for steersmen. London held firm on insisting on three-year contracts of £14 and £20 respectively. The men appear to have introduced other issues which they hoped might receive favourable attention from the Governor and Committee in London. In the end, most of the men either came to terms or agreed to return inland without contract upon assurance that these additional grievances would be brought to the attention of the proprietors. No doubt threats that they would otherwise be sent home influenced some[44].

The grievances raised by them appear to have been justified. They complained that their families in the Orkneys were "often left destitute", presumably because of the costs and problems involved in transmitting money to them. They argued that "the journey from London to their Native place, is generally attended, with an expence,

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[44]H.B.A., A11/117, London Inward Correspondence from York Factory, Letter from William Tomison and Joseph Colen, July 19, 1788, and Letter from Joseph Colen, August 27, 1788. Most of the men eventually signed contracts on the Company's terms although some waited until after the arrival of the ship in August. All but one of the nine holdovers from the previous year signed: the one who did not do so was James Spence Sr., who returned inland once again without a contract. Of the 20 whose contracts expired in 1788, two retired, two refused to sign contracts and were sent home, five returned inland without contracts and the remaining eleven all agreed to the Company's terms. H.B.A., B239/f/1, York Factory Lists of Servants.

of the remains of many years Wages of hard Labour" and requested that servants who were returning home should be allowed to disembark at the Orkneys[45]. The latter concern particularly was probably all too true given the problems the common man would have had in eighteenth century Britain in travelling such a great distance. Tomison and Colen also alluded to the need for reform of recruiting practices in the Orkneys, suggesting that "the Evil would soon be remedied" if a small advance on wages were to be given at the time of engagement[46].

Some of the men had a grievance which had been festering for several years and which now received the sympathetic support of Tomison and Colen. When York Fort was captured by the French in 1782, most of the men who had signed on that year were among the prisoners. Some were on the Company ship that slipped away and they had been let off in the Orkneys while others were carried off to imprisonment in Spain. None received any pay for the period but those who had been released in the Orkneys were re-engaged there in 1783 for a contract period of four years at £6 per year. Those who suffered as prisoners of war had received no recompense and indeed, when they were re-engaged in London in 1783, they had been

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[45]H.B.A., A11/117, London Inward Correspondence from York Factory, Letter from William Tomison and Joseph Colen, July 19, 1788.

[46]Ibid.

given the standard five-year contracts. As a result, those in the former group had started their second contracts in 1787 and thereby had gained a substantial financial advantage over those in the second group. Tomison and Colen strongly supported a request from the four men adversely affected by this situation[47].

Tomison and Colen also requested action on one further matter which they hoped "would give universal content" by asking that "an active experienced Surgeon" be engaged to accompany the men to the inland posts where his presence would be of "great advantage to the Company."[48]

Despite the fact that most of the men returned inland, there were few able young men to replace those who were leaving and the total inland complement remained essentially static.

When the ship arrived late in the summer of 1788, the mood of the London proprietors was clearly indicated to the officers at the Bay. A new set of contract guidelines was to be instituted which was to be followed in all cases. The initial contract was to stay the same, with continued provision for the forty-shilling bounty for residing inland. Second contracts for inland servants were to be at the rate of £12 per year for three years or £14 if they

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[47]Ibid. The four men were James Flett, Jr., John Flett, William Flett, Jr. and Robert Garroch.

[48]Ibid.

were canoe builders. Third contracts would be at the rate of £16 per year for three years or £20 for canoe builders. In effect this was a reduction from the rates they had previously agreed to. It continued to be based on a strict seniority basis with no flexibility for recognition of actual work assignments. Middlemen, bowsmen and steersmen might all be at the same level if their years of service were comparable. The local officers were ordered not to vary terms in any way and that in future any man not willing to come to terms immediately was to be shipped home. Eleven men who had been reluctant to come to terms were ordered sent home. Almost all of them were steersmen[49].

The Company had obviously decided it was necessary to get tough. Unfortunately in the process they effectively destroyed the ability of Tomison and the other local officers to react effectively to local conditions and take the initiative in the way in which former governors had been able to act. Even more damaging to local morale was the action now taken by the Company to end private trade.

In the 1780's there is little evidence for the kind of private trade which had been common earlier in the century, and which had involved a coalition of the ships' captains and the governors in a flourishing clandestine

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[49]H.B.A., A6/14, London Correspondence Outward, Letter to William Tomison and the York Factory Council, May, 1788.

export of furs to England for private sale there. This had been effectively squashed by the introduction of the bounty system. Instead, the private trade which existed inland involved the common servants. The main avenue for the diversion of the furs had been effectively ended in 1786 when the Captains of the ships lost their privilege of selling "slops", European articles imported especially for sale to the men[50]. This had developed into a major source of income for them as the currency used by the men was mainly furs of their own trapping or traded by them from the Indians. At first the Company appears to have been satisfied so long as they retained their monopoly on the importation of furs into England.

Evidence that they might not have such a monopoly came to light in the spring of 1787. A serious flood at York Fort gave Joseph Colen reason to open the boxes belonging to many of the inland servants which they had stored in the Fort, in order to dry out the contents. In this process"various goods and Cloathing of Foreign Manufactury appeared, besides many Trinkets of Base Silver."[51] The men claimed that they obtained them from the Canadians in exchange for flour and other things they obtained as al-

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[50]H.B.A., A1/13, London Correspondence Outward, Letter to Humphrey Marten and the York Factory Council, May, 1786.

[51]H.B.A., A11/117, London Inward Correspondence from York Factory, Letter from Joseph Colen, August 29, 1788.

lowances when they were down at the Bay[52]. After making numerous inquiries, Joseph Colen was unable to unearth any reports of "Traffic with Canadians for Skins" since Tomison had taken command, but prior to that it had been common[53]. Without waiting for the results of Colen's inquiries, the Governor and Committee in London apparently concluded that substantial numbers of furs were being diverted to the Canadians by their own employees and they took action to prevent any further private trading.

In their 1788 letter to York Factory[54], the London Committee ordered that the servants would no longer be able to purchase guns. This policy change was deeply resented both by the men and by Tomison who had made a practice of treating the men's belongings, especially their guns, as reserve stocks of trade goods which could be borrowed when the regular stocks became exhausted. The Committee went on to say;

> It is our express Command that all European Goods should be withheld from our Servants except such Slops and necessaries that may be required for their immediate Consumption.[55]

In order to further reduce the opportunities of the men to

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[52]Ibid., Letter from Joseph Colen, August 27, 1788.

[53]Ibid., Letter from Joseph Colen, August 29, 1788.

[54]H.B.A., A6/14, London Correspondence Outward, Letter to William Tomison and the York Factory Council, May, 1788.

[55]Ibid.

build up a surplus stock of goods they directed that in future all bounties were to be credited against the accounts of the servants in London and that they were not to be paid out in goods or slops under any pretext. The actions taken by the Company were generally well designed to cut off trade between the Canadians and the inland servants as it cut down on the sales of slops, which would have constituted the most attractive stock in trade. Nevertheless it aggravated the discontent of the men and angered William Tomison who brindled at the implication that he was condoning illicit contacts between his men and the Canadians. It confirmed him in his decision to return to England the following year and was the basis for a lengthy letter which he concluded by "lamenting" that his "many services should merit such groundless accusations."[56]

The following summer saw the effective end of the reputed combination among the inland servants. In the face of the determination of the Company to stand firm and to ship home any men who refused to come to terms, only two men returned inland without contracts and in both cases the reasons for this were probably unrelated

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[56]H.B.A., A11/117, London Inward Correspondence from York Factory, Letter from William Tomison, July 22, 1789.

to wage demands[57]. Nevertheless Tomison and Colen faced an even more critical manpower problem. Eleven experienced men had been ordered home and with the outbreak of scurvy which had ravaged York Fort the previous winter only three young men were fit to replace them. Even more critical was the lack of men with sufficient experience to steer canoes. If all eleven were sent home as ordered they would not have had enough steersmen to man the canoes. Four of them came to terms and Tomison and Colen ignored the orders they had received and sent them inland with the canoes in July[58]. Three more were re-engaged after the arrival of the ship as it was necessary to have experienced men to go inland with Philip Turnor and other officers who had returned to York Factory to initiate a serious attempt to establish a foothold in the Athabasca country[59].

In the face of the growing problem they were having in obtaining and keeping good servants from the

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[57]The two men were James Spence Sr., who frequently stayed inland during the summers and does not appear to have been much concerned about such details and Mitchell Oman who had intended to return home and presumably wished to see what the Company might offer rather than sign another contract at the same wages. H.B.A., B239/f/1, York Factory Lists of Servants. James Spence joined the Company in 1773 and had served inland since 1775. He was from the parish of Birsay and in 1789 was about 36 years old.

[58]H.B.A., B239/a/89, York Factory Journals, July 5 to 16, 1789.

[59]Ibid. September 4, 1789.

Orkneys, the Company had already initiated two experiments intended to broaden the size of their labour pool. In their 1788 letter of instructions, the Governor and Committee gave guarded encouragement to Tomison to try to engage Canadians in the service and laid down guidelines for their wages[60]. In 1789 they repeated similar instructions urging that Canadian servants might be employed at a rate of 250 livres per year together with a bounty on furs taken by them inland[61]. They were also ordered to make sure that any Canadians hired were no longer under contract to their former masters. The second shift in their recruiting policy arose out of the desire expressed by Humphrey Marten in 1785[62] and repeated by Joseph Colen in 1787 that "some careful steady Englishmen will be sent out as labourers--men of fair character and those who can bear fatigue."[63]

The first Canadian engaged by Tomison was a man by the name of Charles Alurie who left his former em-

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[60]H.B.A., A6/14, London Correspondence Outward, Letter to Wm. Tomison and the York Factory Council, May 1788.

[61]Ibid., Letter to Wm. Tomison and the York Factory Council, May 27, 1789.

[62]H.B.A., A11/116, London Inward Correspondence from York Factory, Letter from Humphrey Marten, September 12, 1785.

[63]H.B.A., A11/117, London Inward Correspondence from York Factory, Letter from Joseph Colen, September 7, 1787.

ployer and came seeking employment in the spring of 1787[64]. In 1788, another Canadian employee came down to York Fort with Tomison. Aware that this man, James Wood, was a runaway, they hired him but assigned him to duty at York Fort to prevent any disputes with the Canadian traders[65]. Two more came down in 1789, John Butler Grout, "a person who bears a universal good character"[66] and Anthony Godda who was "supposed to be the best (one excepted) servant in the Canadian employ."[67] Two more Canadians had stayed behind

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[64]H.B.A., B239/f/1, York Factory Lists of Servants. Charles Alurie, also referred to as Tuffeldelaire, had run away from his Canadian employers because of alleged bad treatment. He was undoubtedly the one referred to by Alexander Mackenzie as having been taken from him by the English. [W. Kaye Lamb, editor, *The Journals and Letters of Sir Alexander Mackenzie* (Cambridge, 1970), 426.] He was apparently from the parish of St. John, Canada. Robert Longmoor took him into his employ in the fall of 1786 and the following summer he was engaged by Tomison for four years at the rate of £15 a year.

[65]H.B.A., B239/f/1, York Factory Lists of Servants. James Wood was described as a very quiet man who had been brought down from the Great Fall by Mr. Longmoor. He was engaged the following year at £12 per year.

[66]H.B.A., B239/a/89, York Factory Journals, July 16, 1789. John Grout was described as an American by birth and a steersman who had joined the Company and done the work of a servant since November 1, 1788. In fact, he and his canoe mates had attached themselves to the Hudson's Bay Company's men on their voyage in the summer of 1788. He entered contract on July 16, 1789 for three years at £14, but Tomison requested that the Company consider a gratuity in lieu of his earlier service. H.B.A., B239/f/1, Lists of Servants, York Factory.

[67]H.B.A., B239/f/1, York Factory Lists of Servants. Anthony Godda who was listed as being from Quebec had left the employ of the Canadians in the summer of 1788 along with John Grout and three others. He asked for £30 a year but was offered and accepted £25 a year. Despite his experience he was quite young being only 25 years old when he first left the Canadians in 1788.

at Grand Rapids but had indicated a willingness to enter the service in the fall.

The reason for such success in winning over Canadian employees is not clear. Tomison appears to have been doing his best to enlist them it is true, but earlier attempts to hire Canadians had not proved very successful. Perhaps the amalgamation of the North West Company and the Gregory-McLeod partnership resulted in surplus employees, some of whom may have been released from their contracts while they were still in the Northwest. In any case, it appeared as though a number of Canadians might be drawn into the Hudson's Bay Company at last. The major problem that had to be overcome, if the experiment was to be a success, was the prejudice of the Orkneymen against any foreigner. When Charles Alurie was signed on, none of the Orkneymen would ride in a canoe with him and eventually he was able to return inland by virtue of a small canoe which he shared with James Batt, the only English canoeman available[68].

In 1786 there were only two English labouring

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[68]H.B.A., A11/117, London Inward Correspondence from York Factory, Letter from Joseph Colen, August 29, 1788. James Batt was a younger brother to the veteran Isaac Batt. He came out as a labourer about 1774 and was sent inland for the first time the following year. Described as "weak but very willing" by Humphrey Marten in 1776 he served continually at the inland posts until 1788 when he was left at York Fort "being too weak for inland". He served subsequently up the Nelson River but was sent back to the Bay for medical reasons and retired in 1791. H.B.A., B239/f/1, York Factory Lists of Servants; and Rich, *Cumberland House and Inland Journals*, First Series, 19 n.3.

servants on the inland establishment, Isaac Batt and his brother James and both had been employed for a number of years. An attempt was made between 1787 and 1789 to find English labourers who would be suitable for the inland service. Five such men were sent out, William Duncan in 1787, Peter Fidler and John Ward in 1788 and Alex and John Thompson in 1789[69]. A major problem in recruiting appears to have been the low level of remuneration during the initial contract when compared with average pay scales in London where most, if not all of these men were

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[69]H.B.A., B239/f/1, York Factory Lists of Servants.

No comments were entered opposite the name of William Duncan in the servants lists so his inclusion in the list is based on his name alone. He apparently went inland in 1788 but in 1791 was judged unfit for the inland service and his name does not appear on subsequent lists.

Peter Fidler was from Sutton in Derbyshire and had been signed on for five years at £10 a year. He went inland almost immediately and his promotion from labourer to the officer class was very rapid. For a full biography see J. G. MacGregor, *Peter Fidler, Canada's Forgotten Surveyor* (Toronto), 1966).

John Ward was from the parish of St. Andrews in Holborn, a district in the west end of the City of London. Twenty years old, he was given terms of £10 for five years. Unlike Fidler, he remained a canoeman finally deserting to the North West Company in 1794, perhaps because of slowness in promotion.

Alex Thompson, as with William Duncan, is included in this list on the basis of his name in the absence of more definite information. He was under contract for five years at £10 and was assigned to the Swan River post for three years starting in 1970, and was sent home in 1793 because of "bruises he received in a quarrel".

John Thompson was David Thompson's younger brother. John was hired at the age of seventeen for five years at £6 a year. For a time he was assigned to the Swan River, which suggests that Alex may have been related also, and starting in 1794 he was assigned as a bowsman on the expedition led by Malcholm Ross and his brother David. He returned home after one year for reasons that were not recorded.

found[70]. Only two of those who joined accepted contracts at £6 per annum. The remainder had come on the basis of £10 a year for five years. Unlike the situation with the Canadian servants, no overt display of discrimination by the Orkney servants was recorded. Except for the higher wages that they commanded, there appears to have been no impediment to continued expansion of the English component of the work force.

Although they were probably the most important cause of disadvantage to the Hudson's Bay Company in this period, manpower problems were not the only ones they had to face. Richard Glover has pointed out the difficulties the Company faced in developing an adequate system of transportation to make full use of the advantage they had with control of the Bay[71]. He concluded that the solution was found with the adoption of the York Boat after 1795 as the principal vehicle of transportation on the Saskatchewan River system. He argued that introduction of this new

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[70]Average daily wages for labourers in London were about 2 shillings. On that basis, steadily employed workmen could expect to get £25 to £30 in a year. Such rates are not strictly comparable to those offered by the Company as the Hudson's Bay Company servants received their board and room and certain clothing and other allowances. For discussions of wage levels in eighteenth century England see M. Gilboy, *Wages in England in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1934); and G. D. H. Cole and Raymond Postgate, *The Common People 1746-1946* (London, 1966), 68-77.

[71]Richard Glover, "The Difficulties of the Hudson's Bay Company's Penetration of the West", 240-254; and *Cumberland House and Inland Journals*, First Series, lxii to lxix.

system was unnecessarily delayed because of the obstinate delaying tactics of William Tomison.

By 1786, the main impediments to the use of birch bark canoes had been solved. With the added encouragement of bounties, a substantial number of the inland servants had mastered to varying degrees the skills necessary for the manufacture of large canoes patterned after those used by the Canadians. They were adequate for the purpose, although it must be admitted that they could never equal the quality or size of those brought in by the Canadians. This was due to the lack of raw materials equivalent to those available in the vicinity of Three Rivers where most of the Canadian canoes were made. The birch trees of the north west were significantly smaller; thus more pieces of bark had to be used. This meant more seams and a greater possibility that the canoes would not stand up under rough usage. Furthermore as cedar was unavailable the framework had to be constructed with the heavier, though tougher, birch. Consequently the canoes were more prone to leak and more awkward to handle and to carry.

Recognizing the dependence of the Englishmen on canoes that they built at their inland posts, the Canadians went out of their way to make things difficult for them. The Hudson's Bay men had come to depend on the Indians to collect the birch bark for them. According to Tomison, "the canadians is doing all in there Power to

debauch them from getting any."[72] He went on to complain that this had been done ever since Edward Umphreville had joined the North West Company two years earlier.

Initially, canoe building did not loom large as a factor in the history of the Pine Island posts. Manchester House was not well situated to be a canoe building station due to the absence of suitable birch trees within any reasonable distance. Birch bark was purchased from the Indians when possible; but it was used mainly to repair the canoes brought up in the fall and wintered in pits lined with grass to keep them from drying out and cracking from exposure to the winter winds. In fact no canoes were built in the first year there and then only one in each of the succeeding two years. In the same period adequate numbers of new canoes were being manufactured at Hudson House and its successor, South Branch House. Both were located within easy distance of the Birch Hills which had been the Company's main source of birch bark ever since they had started to make their own canoes.

Attempts by the Canadians to shut off the Hudson's Bay Company's sources of bark caused Tomison enough trouble that he adopted the practice of sending out his own men with horses to pick it up at the Indians' tents. Tomison described one such occasion on April 17, 1788

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[72]H.B.A., A11/116, London Inward Correspondence from York Factory, Letter from William Tomison, August 24, 1786.

when he sent Robert Longmoor and Robert Davey[73] to meet some Indians he had sent out to gather birch bark several weeks earlier.

> at noon Mr. Longmoor returned, and informs me he saw the Indians, and spoke to them and on his return met several others going with Liquor from Pangman's House to intercept them, to endeavour to get the Birchrind from them by which reason I was induced to send men to bring the birchrind, and to treat them with 2 Gallons of Brandy for nothing. in the Evening the men returned with the bark except a little that would be of little use to us.[74]

At other times the canoe builders themselves would go off with the Indians to select and help remove the bark they required[75]. In either case the source of bark was four days' travel by horseback to the west, probably in the vicinity of Birch Lake in what is now Alberta.

The unsuitability of Manchester House as a canoe building station caused some serious transportation problems from the beginning. When it was first established in the fall of 1786, the water in the river above Hudson House was so shallow that the canoes could be sent up only half-loaded. There were not enough men to send more

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[73]Robert Davey was an experienced inland employee now in the last year of his service with the Company. First employed as a labourer in 1773 he had accompanied Samuel Hearne in the establishment of Cumberland House in 1774 and in subsequent years was continually employed inland where he had extensive experience living with the Indians. H.B.A., B239/f/1, York Factory Lists of Servants; and Tyrrell, *Journals of Hearne and Turnor*, 198 n.3.

[74]H.B.A., B121/a/2, Manchester House Journals, April 17, 1788.

[75]Ibid., June 28, 1787.

than six canoes if they were also to get goods up by way of the only alternative form of transportation, pack horse. They had never before used horses to transport men and goods over a long distance but despite their inexperience, which caused Longmoor to remark that the horses were "very troublesome", they successfully reached Pine Island with all their goods and belongings[76]. However, the horses had taken two days longer than the canoes and did not constitute an adequate substitute for water transportation, whenever it was feasible.

With only six canoes and no prospect of making more, the traders at Manchester House realized that in the long run some changes might have to be made in transportation arrangements. In the short run they would have to depend, at least in part, on using the horses to take up the slack. One possible long-range solution might be found with the use of boats.

There is little doubt that Tomison tended to believe that a basically successful system ought not to be rashly abandoned. Furthermore the many difficult portages, especially between Cumberland House and the Rock, seemed a major obstacle to the use of boats. To a major degree his views were probably confirmed by his own personal experience with the experimental use of boats in

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[76]H.B.A., B121/a/1, Manchester House Journal, September 30 to October 12, 1786.

1787 and 1788 which he initiated.

In 1786 and 1787, two boats were built on the North Saskatchewan River, the first at Hudson House and the second at Manchester House. The former was built by Magnus Twatt[77], a skilled Orkney craftsman who seems to have been competent as carpenter, boat builder and canoe builder. Twenty feet long and six and one-half feet wide, she was considerably smaller than the later York boats and was apparently intended initially for use as a ferry scow at Hudson House[78]. The next year a similar boat was put together at Manchester House by Magnus Flett[79] who had been brought out to York Factory as a boat builder and sent inland at the suggestion of Humphrey Marten. It was probably intended that a trial should be made of its use on the river but Tomison decided in the spring that low water

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[77]Magnus Twatt had joined the Company in 1771 as a labourer when he was about 20 years old. From the parish of Orphir in the Orkneys he soon earned a reputation as a "brisk young handy man" with particular skill as a carpenter. He came inland to Cumberland House in 1776 and in subsequent years served at Hudson House and Manchester House as well. In 1791 he was reassigned to Cumberland House where he remained in charge of its rebuilding until 1795. H.B.A., B239/f/1, York Factory Lists of Servants; and Rich, *Cumberland House and Inland Journals*, First Series, 143.

[78]H.B.A., B87/a/8, Hudson House Journals, May 13, 1786.

[79]Magnus Flett had been hired as a carpenter and shipwright in 1786 for £25 a year. He was from Stromness and for the first three years of his service was based at York Fort. In the summer he was sent inland by Marten with instructions to Longmoor that he be used in "the building way either of boats or houses". Tomison regarded him as an indifferent workman and he was left at the Bay in 1787 and two years later sent back home for bad behaviour. H.B.A., B239/f/1, York Factory Lists of Servants; and B121/a/1, Manchester House Journals, 1786-87.

levels would render it useless and it was left behind at Manchester House[80].

This did not mean that he was not willing to try the use of boats. The boat at Hudson House would no longer be required there as it had been decided to close the post and it was loaded up with furs, pemmican and birch bark for the trip down to Cumberland House. Tomison himself rode in it along with three others. Not only was it able to carry a larger load than the canoes but it proved faster running downstream with the aid of sail and oars[81]. Despite the success of this first voyage the boat was left at Cumberland House where it was used on Pine Island Lake for local duty. Indeed this was probably why it had been taken down to Cumberland House. In leaving it there, Tomison was not abandoning further experimentation with boats for river transportation.

The second boat was used in the summer of 1788, and it proved to be much less satisfactory. It had been badly constructed in the first place as Magnus Flett had proved to be a very indifferent craftsman. Even after extensive repairs by Gilbert Laughton, of whom it was said

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[80]H.B.A., B121/a/1, Manchester House Journal, April 30, 1787.

[81]Ibid., May 20 and 21, 1787.

"a more serviceable man cannot be had"[82] they "had much difficulty to get over the sand bars owing to the boat being ill built and draws too much water"[83]. The boat was left at Hudson House for the summer and brought back upstream in the fall. Tomison and three others had to pole the boat up which proved very labourious, slow work. It took them nine days to make the trip, arriving a full day later than the canoes[84]. This experience seems to have soured Tomison on any further attempt to use boats in the place of, or even in a supplemental role to the use of canoes. Instead he turned his attention in future years to attempts to establish a canoe building industry at Manchester House and to build up a larger corps of experienced canoemen.

The third major internal problem facing the Hudson's Bay Company in the period between 1786 and 1789 was that of maintaining an adequate supply of quality trade goods for use in the inland posts. This was integrally related to the manpower and transportation policies which have already been discussed. The most critical shortage

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[82] Gilbert Laughton was from the island of Burray and joined the Company at the age of nineteen as smith and labourer in 1782 at a wage of £7 a year. He soon earned the reputation of being "very ingenious" and during his years at Manchester House acted in the capacity of smith, carpenter, gunsmith, cooper and canoe builder. H.B.A., B239/f/1, York Factory Lists of Servants.

[83] H.B.A., B121/a/2, Manchester House Journals, May 8, 1788.

[84] H.B.A., B121/a/3, Manchester House Journals, September 24 to October 3, 1788.

experienced by Tomison was a shortage of liquor (see Table 5). The liquor short fall was attributable in large measure to the rapid increase in its use at the inland posts under the pressure of competition from Canadian traders who were well supplied with it. According to Tomison, one of the reasons the Canadians had such a great advantage in this article was that they imported double-distilled rum which could be mixed with water to increase their supply of trade liquor by a factor of five while the English trade liquor, which had to abide by English proof regulations, was so much weaker that one keg "would not make two and as black as water that had not been Pumped out of a ship for 2 months."[85]

In order to conserve his supplies Tomison tried to convince his opponents to cut down on the use of liquor and on at least one occasion was temporarily successful[86]. He was personally opposed to the use of liquor on moral grounds and was genuinely disturbed by the moral degradation of the Indians which followed excessive use of "pernicious Spiritious Liquors."[87] He therefore undoubtedly felt rather smug when he devised a method of cutting down

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[85]H.B.A., B121/a/2, Manchester House Journals, April 14, 1788.

[86]Ibid., Letter from William Tomison to William Walker, December 26, 1787.

[87]H.B.A., A11/117, London Inward Correspondence from York Factory, Letter from William Tomison, July 20, 1788.

on the quantity of liquor given out as presents without letting his cutomers know it was being done. In the winter of 1787-88, Gilbert Laughton was frequently employed "making brandy kegs smaller by cutting off both ends and putting in the heads fresh."[88] In this way the capacity was reduced from the standard of eight gallons to seven and one-half effecting a saving of over 6%.

These actions were only temporary expedients however, and Tomison urged the Company to "have Brandy of double Strength sent out for Inland" where it could be watered down in the same way as the Canadian spirits[89]. As it turned out this was not possible under British law, so it was decided to set up a small distillery at York Fort which could be used to concentrate the spirits needed at the inland posts. The necessary equipment and instructions were sent out in 1791[90].

The other most damaging shortage occurred with the Brazil Tobacco which was of major importance as an item of trade as well as an article given out as a gift and used in the trade ceremonies (see Table 5). In this case the shortfall resulted from a disastrous drop in the

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[88]H.B.A., B121/a/2, Manchester House Journal, February 23, 1788.

[89]H.B.A., A11/117, London Inward Correspondence from York Factory, Letter from William Tomison, July 20, 1788.

[90]H.B.A., A5/3, London Letters Outward, Letter to William Tomison, May 26, 1789 and Letter to Joseph Colen, May, 1791.

quality of the product.

For many years the Company had consoled itself in the face of growing Canadian competition with the assurance that their goods were of superior quality, and that under conditions of fair competition the Indians would invariably give them preference. This view was held both by the Governor and Committee in London and men in the field like Tomison who wrote on taking command in 1786 that

> all the natives give your Honours Commodities the Preference, but they are intersepted by the canadians in going amongst them with neet Rum debauching them till they get what furs they have.[91]

However, during the first year at Manchester House Tomison got his first indication that the Brazil tobacco stocked at York Fort might be of inferior quality. On February 19, 1787, he condemned and burned two rolls of the tobacco, weighing in all 120 pounds[92]. He concluded that it must have been damaged during the spring flood at York Fort. All of the trade goods were packed and ready to be loaded on the canoes when they got to York Fort in the summer of 1787 so Tomison did not have a chance to see what he had been provided with until the goods were unpacked at Manchester House. What he found did not please

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[91] H.B.A., A11/116, London Inward Correspondence from York Factory, Letter from William Tomison, August 24, 1786.

[92] H.B.A., B121/a/1, Manchester House Journal, February 19, 1787.

him. The tobacco was so bad that he claimed to be "ashamed to send any out or offer it to any Indians at the House" and that it was "no more looked upon [by the Indians] than rotten turnips."[93] Although Tomison tried to mask the rottenness of the tobacco by rubbing it with a solution of sugar, salt and good tabacco boiled in water, he was mortified when one of his Indian hunters sent him word "to go to one of the other houses for some tobacco and send it to him"[94] as he could not smoke what he had received from Tomison.

When down at York Fort, Tomison went through all of the tobacco on stock there and found it all half rotten, condemning 1,859 pounds as being "unfit to be offered to an Indian."[95] As a result, the tobacco available for the inland trade was both bad and in short supply. Even though the tobacco sent out to York Factory in 1788 was of good quality, the inland posts were not able to receive any of it until the following year and for the second straight year they were at a disadvantage in competing with the Canadians whose tobacco was of superior quality.

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[93]H.B.A., B121/a/2, Manchester House Journal, November 12, 1787.

[94]Ibid., January 27, 1788.

[95]H.B.A., A11/117, London Inward Correspondence from York Factory, Letter from William Tomison and Joseph Colen, July 19, 1788.

Tobacco was not the only item where the Canadians had the advantage of better quality. Guns sent out in 1783 had been so bad that half of the barrels burst when tested by John Mellam, the armourer at York Fort[96]. The gunmakers claimed this was because they had been misused and implied the Indians were ignorant of the treatment guns should receive. The York Factory Council strongly denied such allegations.

> All we can possibly say in answer to the Gunmaker's Letter is the Complaint was made of Barrels that had not been used by Indians or English, that an Armourer recommended by Mr. Bond tryed them, that the Effects of such bad barrels being sent out would have been fatal to the life or Limbs of the persons who might have used them had not the timely discovery been made of the badness of them, that the Indians being used to shooting from infancy know as well as the best Gunmaker in London how to charge them and that John Mellam declared the Master Gunmakers give their workmen such small pay for their work the men could not afford to finish the Locks etc. in a better manner.[97]

Complaints about the quality of the guns recurred in 1788 when Tomison and Colen complained that many of the trading guns had burst[98] and on January 28, 1789 when Tomison wrote in his journal:

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[96]H.B.A., A11/116, London Inward Correspondence from York Factory, Letter from York Factory Council, September 16, 1784.

[97]Ibid., Letter from York Factory Council, September 12, 1785. Mr. Bond was the gentleman responsible for proofing all guns supplied to the Hudson's Bay Company.

[98]H.B.A., A11/117, London Inward Correspondence from York Factory, Letter from William Tomison and Joseph Colen, July 19, 1788.

> such is the deceit in Guns and Gun Barrels, no less than five has already burst since we came from York Factory some with the Indians and some with English, several of the Gun Locks are no better some of the Works being very soft.[99]

At the same time, the North West Company had introduced their version of the North West gun which was almost identical in appearance but superior in quality. Tomison was so upset that he accused his rivals of counterfeiting as their copy was so exact that it was even stamped with the same marks[100].

In many other articles also, Tomison and Colen complained that the Canadians had superior goods to offer:

> their Kettles are cheaper and much lighter;- their Knives, Rings, Bracelets, Collars, Gartering Lace, etc. etc. are sold at a cheaper rate, and of a better quality.[101]

Tomison himself wrote, in terms so strong that he risked angering his employers,

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[99]H.B.A., B121/a/3, Manchester House Journal, January 28, 1789.

[100]Ibid., March 13, 1788. It is likely that the guns to which he was referring were marked with a touch mark depicting a seated fox facing to the right in a circular cartouche. This mark has been found on guns made by Ketland who was a supplier to the North West Company at this time. The crest of the Hudson's Bay Company consists of a seated fox facing to the left, and the viewer's mark on the guns they were selling at the time depicted such a fox in a tombstone-shaped cartouche. Further information on the trade guns sold by both companies is contained in T. M. Hamilton, "Indian Trade Guns", *The Missouri Archaeologist* xx (December, 1960), Whole volume.

[101]H.B.A., A11/117, London Inward Correspondence from York Factory, Letter from William Tomison and Joseph Colen, July 19, 1788.

> the quality of many articles are so bad, the natives even throw them in our faces--and tell us there is more Houses than one and they can go and Choise their goods where they Please . . . if such things be done by order of the hon'able board no complaints shall be made by me for the futter [future]--for it is very easy for me to keep Bad goods in the Warehouse untill they are rendered useless--but at Present I think its my duty to inform your Honours that great quantities of goods is and has been sent out--that was not fit to be offered to sale in England nor in this Countary.[102]

The complaints appear to have been taken seriously, being passed on to the manufacturers or suppliers where appropriate or taken into account when considering the purchase of new supplies. In some cases, substitutes were sent out for trial. For example, in 1788, a small supply of tin pots and kettles were sent out to see whether their lightness in weight would make them popular substitutes for the heavy kettles complained of the previous year[103]. As there were no further complaints for a time about the guns and other items referred to in 1788 it must be assumed that steps were taken to ensure that the quality was brought up to standard.

Part 2 Competitive Strategy and Tactics, 1786-89

For the first two years that Pine Island was a

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[102]H.B.A., A11/116, London Inward Correspondence from York Factory, Letter from William Tomison, July 16, 1787.

[103]H.B.A., A6/14, London Correspondence Outward, Letter to William Tomison and the York Factory Council, May, 1788.

centre of trade the North West Company was primarily concerned with re-establishing the monopoly position it had hoped to gain in the Canadian fur trade under the agreement reached in the winter of 1783-84. As E. E. Rich has pointed out, they realized that the high costs of doing business could only allow for a profit if there were "magnificent returns"[104] and under the impact of competition, costs were increased and returns were reduced. Accordingly, in the first year at Pine Island they turned their attention to the elimination of their Canadian rivals, the Gregory-McLeod and Shaw-McKay partnerships.

The large quantities of goods, especially liquor, which were poured into the Northwest have already been mentioned. A few years later, Alexander Mackenzie referred to the competition which occurred as "the severest struggle ever known in that part of the world" and claimed it had led to "every oppression which a jealous and rival spirit could instigate."[105] Although the main target of the North West Company for the time being was the Gregory-McLeod partnership, competition with the Hudson's Bay Company was also stepped up as all of the companies were anxious to garner as much as possible of the trade.

The competitive positions of the four concerns competing at Pine Island have already been described. The

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[104]Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company, II*, 186.

[105]Lamb, 78.

basic competitive strategy employed by all of them was that of attempting to firm up and expand their trading alliances or relationships with the Indians. The range of tactics adopted by the traders to achieve this end constitutes one of the most interesting features of life on Pine Island during its first years.

Ever since 1774 when the Hudson's Bay Company had established its first inland post, it had continued to send out winterers to stay with the trading Indians in order to encourage them to hunt for furs and to discourage them from trading elsewhere. As a byproduct of this policy, an able body of experienced men with an intimate knowledge of Indian customs and languages had been built up. Many of these had advanced to the highest positions in the inland service. William Tomison, William Walker and Robert Longmoor had all spent winters with the Indians.

In this first year at Manchester, four men were sent out to live with the Blood and Piegan Indians[106]. These were the most distant groups of Indians yet engaged in a regular trade and both appear to have been contacted originally by Hudson's Bay Company winterers. With these Indians, the Hudson's Bay Company claimed to enjoy a virtual trade monopoly. Accordingly their most experienced winterers were sent to stay with them. Isaac Batt and

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[106]H.B.A., B121/a/1, Manchester House Journals, October 21, 1786.

James Spence Sr. wintered with the Blood Indians and brought them in with a considerable trade in the spring. James Gaddy[107] and Robert Davey travelled to the Rocky Mountains with the Piegan Indians and when they returned in the spring they brought over 500 skins of their own. The Indians who accompanied them traded an even larger quantity. Trade ferried in this way safely past the agents of opposing companies accounted for at least half that garnered at Manchester House in this first year[108] (see Figure 6).

Although the most experienced winterers were sent to winter far away among almost unknown tribes, a number of other employees performed similar, and in some ways more dangerous service among Indians living more close at hand. It was with these groups that competition between the various companies extended into the very tents of the Indians. Under such circumstances the system

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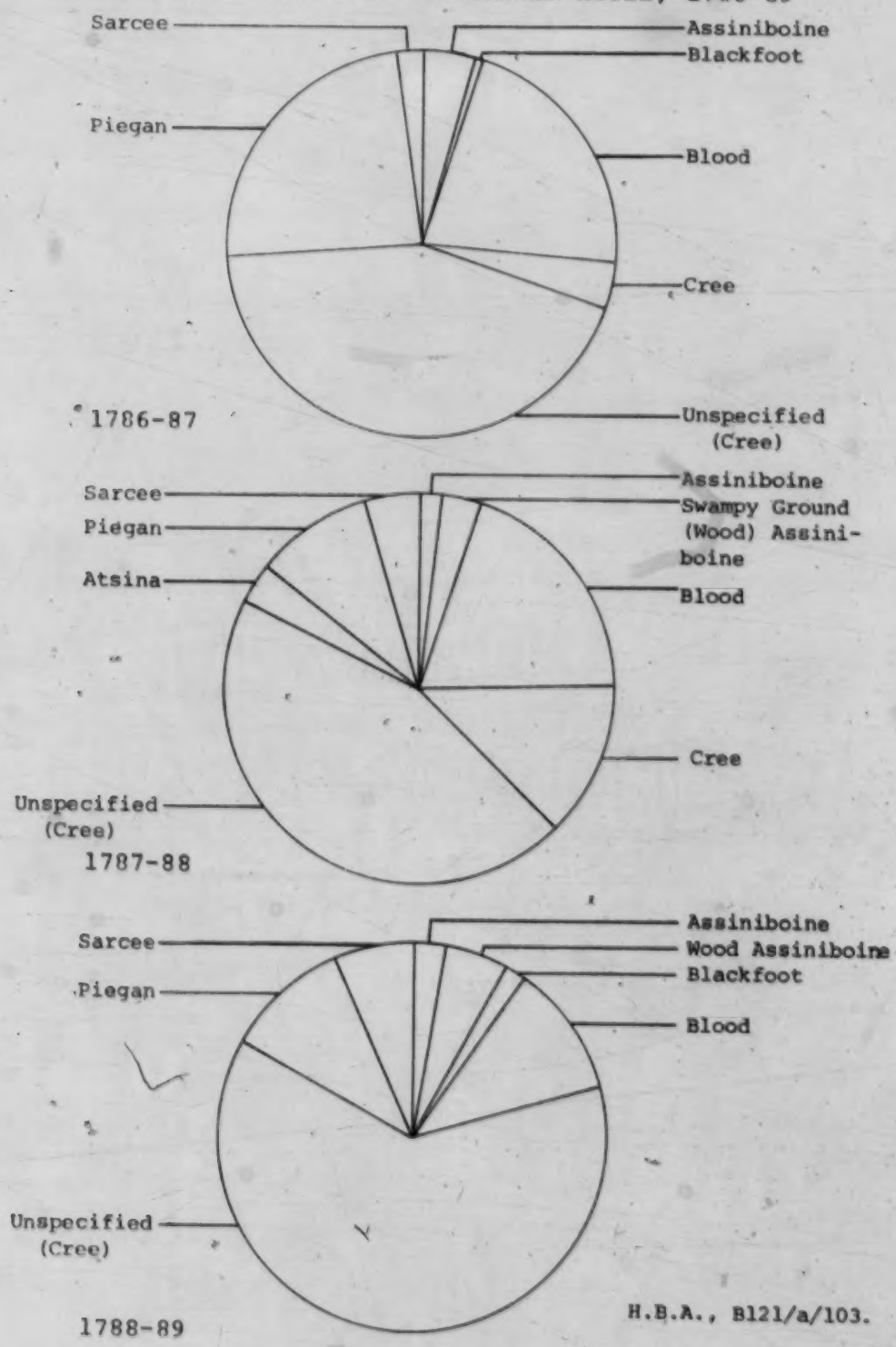
[107]James Gaddy was an Orkney servant from Evie who had entered the employ of the Company in 1781 at the age of 21. He was listed in 1786 as a very good man "particularly recommended in Mr. Tomison's journal". (H.B.A., B239/f/1, York Factory Lists of Servants.) Though still a young man he had wintered with the Piegan Indians the previous year and was apparently well accepted by them.

[108]The Bloods brought in over 1,000 MB, mostly in wolves, while the Piegan Indians traded over 1,200 MB. In addition, Isaac Batt and James Spence brought over 200 wolves and beaver of their own trapping while James Gaddy and Robert Davey did even better bringing 500 skins. With wolves valued at 2 MB each it is likely that the men's trappings exceeded 1,000 MB. The total would therefore have been well over 3,000 out of the 6,000 MB traded at Manchester House in this season. H.B.A., B121/a/1, Manchester House Journal, March 9-11, April 9-12 and April 28, 1787.

Figure 6:

BREAKDOWN OF TRADE AT MANCHESTER HOUSE, 1786-89



H.B.A., B121/a/103.

proved more costly and less successful to the traders.

In November of 1786, Manchester House had twelve of their men out living with the Indians, the four already mentioned who were with the Blood and Piegan Indians, five with the Sarcee and the Cree on the plains[109] and three in the immediate area, probably with the Cree Indians who lived north of the North Saskatchewan River[110]. Each small party was supplied with a small stock of trading goods to be used for presents to encourage the Indians to come in to trade with the right company. Despite these incentives their efforts were not always successful. Three Canadians were driven out by the Indians they were with in the lat-

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[109]James Tate, William Flett Sr. and James Batt went out with the Sarcee and Cree on October 21 and were joined by James Davey and John Flett on November 14, 1787. Ibid.

James Tate was an experienced servant from Orphir in Orkney who signed on in 1778 as a labourer. He had worked inland since 1779 and was highly regarded. Rich, *Cumberland House and Inland Journals*, Second Series, 15, n.1.

William Flett Sr. from Grimbister in the parish of Firth, Orkney, had joined in 1773 and served inland continuously since 1774. Tyrrell, *Journals of Hearne and Turnor*, 111, n.4.

James Davey from Firth in Orkney had been recruited as a labourer in 1783 and was about 25 years old in 1786. H.B.A., B239/f/1, York Factory Lists of Servants.

[110]Hugh Lisk and William Saunders went out to tent with local Indians on October 29 and were later joined by James Johnstone on November 22, 1786. H.B.A., B121/a/1, Manchester House Journal.

Hugh Lisk of Orphir in Orkney had signed on in 1782 and was subsequently a prisoner of the French. He was 25 years old in 1786. H.B.A., B239/f/1, York Factory Lists of Servants.

James Johnstone from Birsay, Orkney, had been hired as a labourer in 1781. In 1786 he was 30 years old and listed as a labourer at £14 a year. Ibid.

ter part of October[111]. On December 21 Hugh Lisk, James Johnson and William Saunders returned because the Indians they were with were "using them ill" by employing their guns and ammunition to hunt with and then going in to the Canadians with the product of the hunt[112]. Generally, however, it appears to have been a worthwhile practice. Not only did it help to firm up a trading alliance but it relieved the pressure on the limited provisions available at the posts as the winterers were guests of the Indians who assumed responsibility for their maintenance. An analysis of trading contacts during the year suggests that about a third were with Indians that the traders were wintering with but the journals do not contain enough information on the amount traded at all trading sessions to allow any estimate of the number of furs involved[113].

With the local Indians it was often found necessary to send out small parties of men to trade with them *"en derouine"*. Going to the Indian camps in much the same way as a travelling pedlar was a way of forestalling attempts by opposing companies to steal one's customers. At the same time it provided an opportunity to debauch

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[111]Ibid., October 30, 1786.

[112]Ibid., December 21, 1786.

[113]Out of 29 trading sessions recorded in the journals at least ten were with Indians among whom Hudson's Bay men were wintering. Ibid.

the customers of other traders. All companies resorted to this practice despite the fact that it appears to have been costly and therefore not necessarily profitable. One such excursion netted the Hudson's Bay Company only 28 MB in furs in exchange for $24\frac{7}{10}$ MB in goods. This would have represented a loss as it is likely the goods were valued at York Fort Standard[114]. Furthermore, this practice laid considerable stress on having large numbers of men and a substantial stock of goods. It also placed the men in a vulnerable position vis-a-vis the Indians, especially when liquor formed an important part of their trade inventory. The costs and dangers involved encouraged the companies to cooperate on some of these ventures. One such occasion arose in January, 1787 when McKay and Pangman jointly sent four men out with goods to trade and give away. They were directed to compete with two sent out by Tomison for the same purpose[115]. This arrangement did not prejudice the possibility of other alliances being formed for other projects.

Perhaps even more important in competitive tactics were the small temporary outposts established by the traders on Pine Island to compete with and apply pressure on the North West Company posts at Frenchman Butte and the Battle River. The outposts were presumably similar to

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[114]Ibid., December 25, 1786.

[115]Ibid., January 24, 1787.

the outpost operated by Champagne for William Holmes on Pine Island.

Two of the companies cooperated in establishing an outpost to oppose Umphreville early in January, 1787. Hearing that some Assiniboines who had come in to them for tobacco were on their way to trade their furs at Frenchman Butte instead, McKay and Tomison lost no time in going up themselves in an attempt to head them off. As McKay already had an outpost there, they used that as a base. Robert Longmoor arrived shortly after and remained in charge of Hudson's Bay Company trade at this place until the end of February. This venture netted the Hudson's Bay Company about 100 MB in furs[116].

Towards the end of January Tomison sent men down to tent with men sent by McKay and Pangman close by Holmes' plantation. Because of the Irishman's reputation as a fierce and sometimes unscrupulous competitor they had agreed to act in concert "should he offer to fire upon them as he did to those who came to tent beside him the last year."[117]

As the winter wore on, instances of sharp practices by the traders appear to have become more common. Indians coming in to trade were frequently intercepted by rival traders and lured away with presents of rum or

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[116]Ibid., January 4, to March 2, 1787.

[117]Ibid., January 29, 1787.

brandy[118]. Pangman appears to have had an advantage in this practice due to his greater resources in manpower and liquor. One defence used by Tomison was to send men back with Indians who came in for tobacco in order to "prevent the Canadians from debauching them with liquor."[119]

Frequently questions of debt were involved. The scramble for customers in the fall of the year resulted in the extension of large amounts of credit to the Indians by all companies. Although no figures are available for 1786-87, 1700 MB in goods were given out on credit in the fall of 1790 at Manchester House[120]. Clearly the loss of customers often involved more than just the loss of potential trade and profit. Loss of debts was regarded as a very serious matter by all of the traders and in most cases they would be settled in an amicable manner. For example, late in January a Sarcee Indian who owed debt to Tomison went to trade with Pangman instead. The next day Tomison wrote in his journal,

> early this morning I went to Mr. Pangman's House, and insisted that he pay me the Indians credit, as he had sent a man on the road to meet him, and prevented his coming to me which he did immediately, this I thought the most prudent Method I could take

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[118]Ibid., November 22, 1786, January 4, March 1 and April 8, 1787.

[119]Ibid., April 8, 1787.

[120]H.B.A., A11/117, London Inward Correspondence from York Factory, Letter from Joseph Colen, September 26, 1791.

> to recover the Debt without falling out with the Indian, and perhaps may not be any Obstruction in his coming here another time.[121]

Apparently such an amicable solution was not always possible. Tomison could be stubborn and unyielding and William Holmes had previously demonstrated he would not scruple at resorting to physical intimidation. An interesting reflection of this is contained in a letter addressed by William Tomison and George Hudson, the master at Cumberland House to the Commander-in-Chief in Canada. It appears to have been intended for delivery via the inland route by Donald McKay and thus probably incorporates sentiments with which he would have agreed.

> We the Servants of the Honourable Hudson's Bay Company, have of late years received very ill treatment from a set of lawless men that has passes from Canada for trading in the interior parts of Hudson's Bay, it has been a long standing Custom Since the Company's first settling in Hudson's Bay to give large Credits to Indians, but now of late years by the great quantity of Rum they bring from Canada which this sett of Men dispersed amongst the Company's Creditors in all parts along the Bay, Debauching the natives into a state of insensibility and takes from them by force what they cannot obtain with Goods. this I call Robbery. and defrauding the Company out of their property, but we hope for the time to come that better regulations will be made, and that passes will be given to those only that are qualified for such an undertaking, and not to a set of men that neither regards King or Government. Mr. Donald Mackay, has suffered much by the treachery of Mr. Forbisher's

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[121] H.B.A., B121/a/1, Manchester House Journal, February 1, 1787.

> Partnership. I myself have been threatened to be shot by Wm. Holmes. it grieves us to see a Body of Indians destroyed by a set of Men, merely for self Interest, doing all in their Power to Destroy Posterity, so we hope that your Excellency will make such regulations as will preserve Posterity, and not to be Destroyed by firery double Distilled Rum from Canada. If such evils is not remided, Complaints must be made to the Government of great Britain, which we hope that Just and Honorable Body will take into consideration.[122]

The letter, while doubtless partisan, points out clearly some of the effects that competition was having on both the traders and the Indians.

The deterioration in the traders' situation is clearly demonstrated in the Manchester House Journals. Taking advantage of the competitive situation the Indians were becoming increasingly difficult to satisfy. In some instances they spread their trade among the traders in order to take advantage of the presents and hospitality of all of them. For example, on October 20, 1786, Longmoor recorded,

> one Southern Indian arrived from where some Indians is tenting and Sussee's. He brought in a middling trade had I got it all, but as there was three Houses, he divided his trade in three and would do no other all I could say, for they are too knowing and wants to make the most,[123]

The Indians clearly became very sharp traders well able to take advantage of the most favourable rates that they could

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[122]Ibid., Letter at end of Journal for 1786-87.

[123]Ibid., October 20, 1786.

obtain for the goods they desired. On November 13, 1786, Tomison remarked that he traded with some of the local Indians and

> made them presents as far as trade will allow, but there is no doing with them nor is it possible to please them when there is so many Houses to go to, the Canadians is giving the same Quantity of Liquor for 20 skins, that they used to give for 50.[124]

Some Indians doubtless avoided payment of debt by shifting allegience from one Company or post to another and were willing accessories to the traders' efforts to "debauch" them.

The lavish use of liquor to show hospitality and as an article of trade made the trading experience more dangerous and disagreeable to the traders, as well as more costly.

> they do nothing but go from House to House to get Drunk, and what furrs they bring is paid for before ever they trade any skins. it is a disagreeable task to deal with Indians as times is now.[125]

Trading visits became longer as the actual trading was preceded by a lengthy drinking bout. A tent of Indians that came in from the Beaver River on January 11 spent almost a week on the preliminaries before trading their skins on January 17. During this time they were presumably being liberally treated, so liberally that one

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[124]Ibid., November 13, 1786.

[125]Ibid., January 29, 1787.

of the men fell in the fire while drunk and was badly burned[126].

One result of this situation was a deterioration in relations between the Indians and the traders. Liquor undoubtedly played a part in the disagreement that led to three Canadians being driven away from the Indians they were tenting with on October 30, 1786.

> The rest of the Indians went to the Canadiand and all carried off liquor . . . three Canadians were sent off with their Indians to pass the winter, on the night the Indians chased them off and snapped their guns at them.[127]

It was perhaps inevitable that the very life of the traders would eventually be endangered. This point was driven home late in April when word arrived of a Canadian

> being killed by the Southward Indians six days agoe for reasons not yet known, the body was found about 4 miles from here, on the other side of the River with many marks of arrow barbs in his Body and much cut & sliced in the face.[128]

Competition did not prevent the maintenance of fairly cordial relationships between the traders, especially in the face of common problems. It seems likely that the death of the unfortunate Canadian was mourned in all camps as they must all have felt vulnerable to such a fate. They were prepared to pool their resources against

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[126]Ibid., January 11-17, 1787.

[127]Ibid., October 30, 1786.

[128]Ibid., April 23, 1787.

common enemies, whether they were of human or natural agency. Reference has already been made to the way in which they combined to protect themselves against possible retaliation when they sent men down to oppose William Holmes at the Battle River. On more than one occasion, Tomison borrowed provisions from other traders when his own supplies were insufficient to outfit men sent on a journey[129]. In the spring, Donald McKay came to the assistance of the English in meeting a medical emergency. An accident which occurred while the men were felling trees for firewood resulted in a serious fracture to the upper arm of William Rich, a young Orcadian servant of the Hudson's Bay Company. No one at Manchester House was competent to deal with the injury and Tomison

> sent for Mr. McKay for his assistance and advice in setting it as he had been in the army and seen much of that sort.[130]

As the supply of medicines at Manchester was inadequate, McKay provided some from his stock, in particular quinine, the powdered bark of the "fever tree", cinchona, which was used to treat high fevers[131]. McKay's doctoring was successful and before the end of the summer, Rich was back

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[129]Ibid., November 15, 1786 and January 8, 1787.

[130]H.B.A., B121/a/1, Manchester House Journal, April 17, 1787.

[131]H.B.A., B121/a/6, Manchester House Journal, March 9, 1791.

to full duty.

In the spring of 1787, William Tomison left Robert Longmoor in charge of Manchester House for the summer months. The trade had been quite encouraging, especially when one considers the competitive situation. Over 6,000 MB worth of furs were carried out in the spring, many of which had to be freighted overland as far as Hudson House because of low water levels and the shortage of canoes at Manchester House[132]. By spring they had run out of many important trade goods and Tomison improvised by borrowing guns from his men in order to meet the demands of the Indians[133]. Over 1,000 MB of the returns comprised

> the Men's trappings, and what they have brot in from the Different Expeditions they have been sent upon purchased with their own necessaries, as also guns borrowed from them, all of which will go to next Years Account.[134]

It seems likely that the Manchester House operation turned a modest profit for the Hudson's Bay Company. There were substantial increases in fur returns from the inland posts and York Factory as a whole (see Table 3). In consequence the York Factory brought returns of almost £15,000 when sold. This would have constituted a profit of approxi-

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[132]H.B.A., B121/a/1, Manchester House Journal, April 26, 1787.

[133]Ibid., April 12, 1787.

[134]Ibid., April 28, 1786.

mately £4,000 on the basis of expenses in 1786 (see Figure 7).

In 1787 the Gregory-McLeod Company was reported to have lost over £10,000 in the two years that it had been active[135] and prospects for future profit were clouded by the war between Russia and Turkey which had cut off the rich Russian fur market and resulted in a fall in prices in London[136]. The success achieved by Pangman is difficult to judge. It is possible that he may have traded a substantial number of furs but the high level of competition suggests this would have been unlikely.

The fortunes of the North West Company as a whole are more difficult to document although there is some evidence to suggest that they also lost heavily.

In 1787, the partnership of Benjamin and Joseph Frobisher was dissolved by the death of the former. There were insufficient ready assets in the partnership to meet demands upon it and Joseph Frobisher was forced to seek bankruptcy. He blamed his financial embarrassment on losses suffered during the American War, on the fall in

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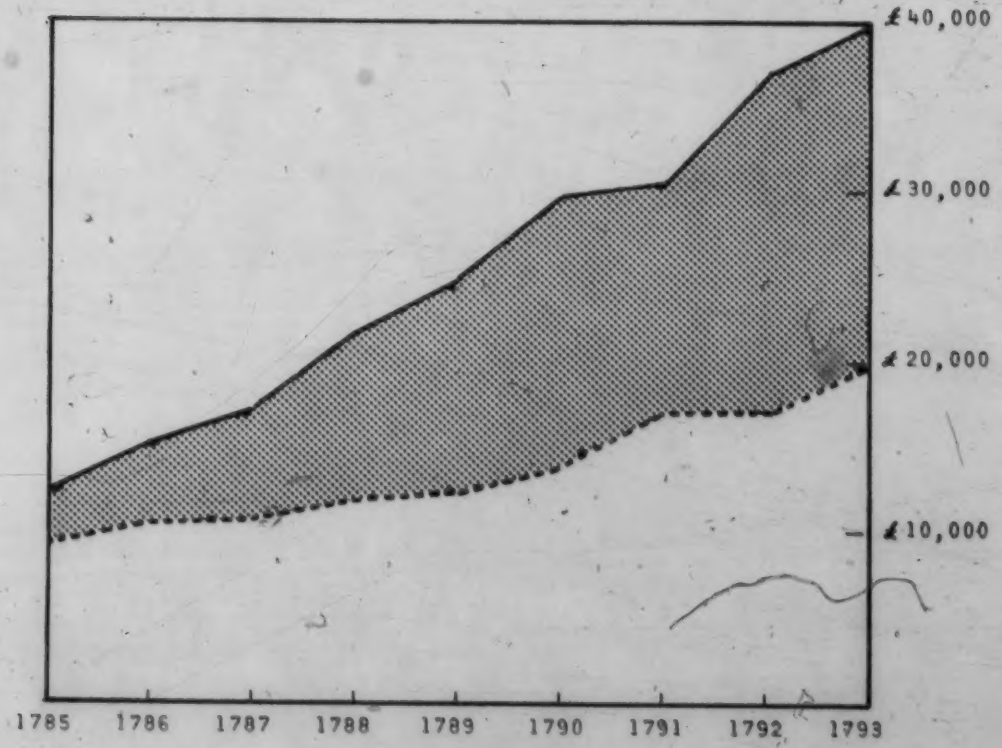
[135]H.B.A., B121/a/2, Manchester House Journal, September 27, 1787.

[136]Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company II*, 190 and P.A.C., MG 19 A5, Letter Book of Joseph Frobisher, Letter to Thomas A. Coffin and William D. Powell, January 10, 1788.

Figure 7:

YORK FACTORY RETURNS[1]



Legend: --------- Expenditures during year indicated.
——————— Fur sales two years later.

Profit realized.

[1]H.B.A., A15/13-15, Grand Journals.

fur prices during the Russian war and finally on his inability to get credit. This last factor arose out of the court action taken against him in an attempt to collect his debts[137].

Further evidence for the financial weakness of the North West Company is to be seen in the level of their returns and their expenses. As indicated before the Company claimed to have averaged returns of £30,000 between 1784 and 1786. Innis suggests that returns for the 1786 outfit may have been £32,403.12[138] but Frobisher's letters would suggest a figure of no more than £22,269[139] as the Frobisher partnership probably held at least three shares. When one considers that their investment in goods alone had exceeded £25,000 it becomes clear that they must have suffered a very substantial loss.

In consequence it is highly likely that the North West Company was predisposed towards an end to competition. In April, 1787, Simon McTavish wrote to Joseph Frobisher proposing that they form a partnership to "better keep control of affairs both up-country and in Montreal".[140] He pointed out that between them they con-

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[137]Ibid.

[138]Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada*, 259.

[139]Frobisher indicated that the shares of J. and B. Frobisher brought returns of £4,175.9. P.A.C., MG 19 A5, Letter Book of Joseph Frobisher, Letter to Brickwood Pattle and Co., August 25, 1788.

[140]Ibid., Letter from Simon McTavish to Joseph Frobisher, April 1787.

trolled almost half the concern. His greatest worry appears to have been that Gregory might persist in his opposition

> which I am afraid may be done with success in the end unless we take the most effectual steps to prevent it.[141]

This partnership was duly formed, but the arrangement to end the competition with Gregory's company was forged at Grand Portage, and not in Montreal. The catalyst was provided by the news that John Ross[142], a partner of the Gregory-McLeod company, had been killed in a quarrel with some of Peter Pond's men. Negotiations were begun and within a few days an agreement for the amalgamation of the two companies had been concluded[143].

The Agreement of 1787 provided the North West Company with the basic understanding which was to govern it for the next five years. It formed the basic constitution for the organization and operation of the Company.

Under the Agreement reached at Grand Portage, four new shares were created, one going to each of the surviving partners in the smaller company, Normand McLeod, John Gregory, Peter Pangman and Alexander Macken-

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[141]Ibid.

[142]John Ross first appeared in fur trade licenses in 1779 and since 1780 had been associated with Peter Pangman. In 1785 he took charge of the Athabasca district for the Gregory-McLeod partnership. Wallace, *Documents Relating to the North West Company*, 496.

[143]See Masson, *Les Bourgeois de la Compagnie du Nord Ouest* (Quebec, 1889), Volume I, 19; and Lamb, 78.

zie[144]. As it was too late to amalgamate their outfits at such short notice, it was agreed that one-fifth of the returns from the coming year would go to the former Gregory-McLeod company with adjustments to be made on the basis of inventories of property already inland[145]. This would appear to have been a very equitable arrangement when one compares the investments made by the two companies. Gregory and McLeod's share of the joint investment of goods was £4,700 out of a total of £26,700 or 17.6%[146].

In one major way the North West Company was not changed. Joseph Frobisher and Simon McTavish still dominated the Company with effective control of eleven out of twenty shares. Frobisher's influence was waning, however, and Simon McTavish was beginning to emerge as the most influential partner. In the fall of 1787, Frobisher and McTavish entered into an equal partnership which gave them virtually complete control over the financial affairs of the Company[147]. To cement their control they had reached an agreement that all future outfits would be supplied

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[144]Another minor change also took place in Montreal where one of McBeath's shares was acquired by Simon McTavish. Wallace, *Documents Relating to the North West Company*, 14.

[145]Ibid., 82-84.

[146]Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada*, 253.

[147]A copy of the agreement is reproduced in Wallace, *Documents Relating to the North West Company*, 77-81.

solely through their agency[148]. However, because many of the goods had already been ordered for the following year, the agreement would not take full effect until 1789.

There is no solid evidence concerning the degree of success achieved by Donald McKay. It is known that he returned to Montreal in the spring "to decide some disputes between him and some of the other traders."[149] Perhaps these involved his continued association with Alexander Shaw. There is some suggestion that he had discussed with William Tomison the possibility of coming over to the Hudson's Bay Company and made definite proposals to the Company to do so[150]. His share of the trade must have been great enough to warrant continuing for another year but it seems unlikely that he could have recouped losses suffered in the previous year.

In the fall of 1787, only three rival companies returned to Pine Island, the Hudson's Bay Company, and the two remaining Canadian companies. In the place of Donald McKay, who had returned to Montreal, there was Angus

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[148]P.A.C., MG 19 A5, Letter Book of Joseph Frobisher, Letter to Brickwood Pattle and Co., October 16, 1787.

[149]H.B.A., B121/a/2, Manchester House Journals, September 27, 1787.

[150]H.B.A., A6/14, London Correspondence Outward, Letter to William Tomison and the York Factory Council, May 1788.

Shaw[151], the son of Alexander Shaw. Shaw's previous experience had probably been gained as a clerk either in the Nipigon territory with his father or as clerk to McKay. As he arrived with six men in a light canoe[152] it is likely that he brought in no more goods. The decision to stay another year was probably based largely on a desire to try and realize a profit on goods already invested.

The North West Company reorganized its establishment on the North Saskatchewan River in order to reflect the changed circumstances. Pangman remained on Pine Island but now his post was being operated on behalf of the North West Company in which he held a share. Edward Umphreville's post at Frenchman Butte was closed, presumably as it might interfere with the trade at Pine Island. Umphreville was thereby demoted to a position of helping William Holmes at the Battle River. Holmes' influence was also reduced by the presence of Pangman in the same company. Of eleven large canoes brought in under the command of Umphreville and Pangman, eight came up to Pine Island and only three were allocated to the Battle River post[153].

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[151]Because only the surname is used throughout William Tomison's journals this identification is based on Peter Fidler's later account in H.B.A., E3/1, Journals of Peter Fidler, October 4, 1792.

[152]H.B.A., B121/a/2, Manchester House Journal, September 27, 1787.

[153]Ibid., October 20, 1787. According to Tomison, Pangman brought in 240 bundles of goods including 84 kegs of double distilled rum. Ibid., May 25, 1788.

The Hudson's Bay Company was in much the same position as it had been in the previous year. Men were still in short supply and their supply of goods was not only limited but, as we have seen, some important items were of poor quality. Only 12,600 MB in goods had been brought inland[154] and although the overplus on the inland trade was normally considerable, under conditions of vigorous competition most of it was used up in presents. The only bright spot was that streamlining of packing procedures at the Bay had given Tomison and his men a headstart and they arrived at Pine Island well ahead of their main rivals. This gave them an opportunity to outfit the Indians and send them off before the opposition could arrive. But it also proved to be an expensive procedure as it was necessary to take worthless summer beaver in trade or lose the opportunity of getting the furs when they were in season[155].

Angus Shaw was the second trader to arrive at Pine Island. Initially Tomison and Shaw appear to have got along very well. Both were actively engaged for a while in giving out credits and according to Tomison they

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[154]H.B.A., B234/a/87, York Factory Journal, July 18, 1787.

[155]H.B.A., B121/a/2, Manchester House Journal, October 3, 1787.

agreed to limit the use of liquor[156]. One practice they abandoned entirely was that of sending liquor out to the Indians as a present to encourage them to come in to trade.

This fall, Tomison sent even larger numbers of men out to winter with the Indians in order to secure their loyalty. Isaac Batt and his son-in-law, James Spence Sr. went with four others to winter with the Blood Indians. James Gaddy went with seven other men, including David Thompson to winter with the Piegan Indians[157]. Thompson was sent to learn the language and his memories of this winter were the basis for some of the most interesting sections of his published *Narrative*. His account of the way of life of the Piegan has become one of the most famous and important descriptions of Plains Indian life before extensive European contact and has contributed greatly to our knowledge of Indian culture[158].

On October 20, 1787 Peter Pangman arrived at Pine Island in a light canoe. Almost immediately his superior strength in men and goods, especially in liquor, began to make itself felt. Arriving too late to partake in the fall trade and outfit the local Indians he sent his

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[156]Ibid., Letter from Tomison to William Walker, December 26, 1787.

[157]Ibid., October 9, 1787.

[158]Glover, *David Thompson's Narrative*.

men out with liquor and other presents to be used in an attempt to encourage the Indians to bring in the furs they obtained to trade with him. The understanding reached between Shaw and Tomison was now nullified. Tomison remarked;

> by reason of that great villain Pangman sending off men with rum to debauch some Indians that Mr. Shaw and myself gave credit to on our arrival here . . . I sent to the Indians with a little liquor and Tobacco to be given them as encouragement for them to bring their furrs in here to trade. this is a pernicious Custom, and a very expensive one, but I am obliged to do as my Neighbours do or else be laughed at.[159]

In this particular instance, Pangman's tactic was successful, and James Tate reported to Tomison

> that Mr. Pangman sent five men with five kegs of rum but no other sorts of goods except Tobacco and has traded the most part of what the Indians had,[160]

but they were in his estimation "bought at a dear rate."[161]

For a time it appeared that the spirit of co-operation which had been generally present on Pine Island the previous year was starting to evaporate in the absence of an external competitive threat. In November, Tomison accused Pangman of having locked up some Fall Indians within his gates rather than see them carry their furs elsewhere. Such hard-line competitive techniques were sure to

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[159]Ibid., November 29-30, 1787.

[160]Ibid., December 10, 1787.

[161]Ibid., December 12, 1787.

create hard feelings. Fortunately, any residue of ill humour was apparently forgotten in the glow of the warmer feelings engendered by Christmas. On December 26, Tomison wrote with obvious satisfaction that

> all parties finding it highly necessary for the Preservation of the Natives we have agreed not to send any more liquor out to the Plains this Season, nor any other sort of goods whatever and that the Indians is to have their free Liberty to go to any house they please, without being intercepted,[162]

This bargain appears to have been kept for a while but it did not prevent a serious altercation between Tomison and Shaw on January 8, 1788.

It was the practice of most traders to refuse to take out-of-season or badly prepared skins in order to maintain a reasonable level of quality. Under conditions of competition, Tomison, and presumably other traders as well, had deviated from this practice and was prepared to buy poor skins because he felt he might lose customers and would not get what good skins they had to offer. Clearly this provided another means to win over the customers of other traders and Tomison felt that Shaw had been guilty of doing so. Tomison recorded his version of the story as follows:

> I had some words with Mr. Shaw for trading a bad Skin from an Indian that came to me, which I had refused. this brought on a

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[162]Ibid., Letter from Tomison to William Walker, December 26, 1787.

> great dispute between him and me, which ended in having the Skin brought, and cut to pieces before the Indian so that it would not be in his Power to defraud the said Indian from me by giving encouragement for bad Skins.[163]

Being in a superior position vis-a-vis Shaw, Tomison clearly did not scruple at employing some of the same bullying tactics that he ascribed to Pangman and Holmes.

As the winter wore on Tomison resorted more frequently to sharp practices in order to collect his debts and debauch the customers of the other companies. On one occasion he rigged an Indian in full and treated him to a full keg of brandy notwithstanding the fact that Pangman had already clothed him "in expectation of getting the whole"[164] of his trade. By March he was no longer abiding by the spirit of the agreement reached at Christmas and on at least two occasions[165] he locked up the furs of an Indian rather than allow him to take them elsewhere to trade. Pangman also appears to have reverted to his earlier policy, using his large stocks of trade goods, especially liquor, to advantage[166].

By spring, Tomison's shortage of trade goods was beginning to give him problems. With economies and

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[163]Ibid., January 9, 1788.

[164]Ibid., April 20, 1788.

[165]Ibid., March 17 and April 14, 1788.

[166]Ibid., April 14 and 17, 1788.

the adoption of some rather sharp practices he was able to stretch his dwindling stocks. Powder was conserved by "pinching the Natives"[167] and the smith, Gilbert Laughton, was employed "making brandy kegs smaller".[168] In part the shortage was attributable to the fact that Tomison was enjoying a very successful trade, despite the disappointing returns received from the Piegan Indians whose trade fell by about 60% (see Figure 6). By the end of the season he found that he had traded about 7,500 MB which amounted to an increase of at least 25%, while the total inland returns rose to 14,500 MB as compared with the 12,000 carried down to the Bay a year earlier. (See Table 3.) Profits based on subsequent sales of furs from York Factory rose to over £6,600 (see Figure 7).

The year just ending proved to be the last for the Shaw-McKay combination on Pine Island. There are no figures on their returns but it suffices to note that they did not return. The partnership still had some resources, however, as it continued to operate for at least another year in the Nipigon area[169].

The quantity of furs carried out by the North

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[167]Tomison admitted to this practice in a letter to Walker on March 16, 1788. Ibid. This was a traditional means of varying measurement in order to adjust the actual trading standard.

[168]Ibid., February 23, 1788.

[169]Morton, *A History of the Canadian West*, 426.

West Company in the spring of 1788 was not encouraging. According to Tomison, Pangman made only 129 packs[170] while the entire produce of the river was only 200 packs according to Patrick Small and Alexander Mackenzie[171]. At an average of 60 MB per pack this would have equalled about 12,000 MB which was less than the 14,500 MB obtained by the Hudson's Bay Company at their inland posts along the Saskatchewan. Given the much higher investment in goods it is likely that the North West Company was able to continue only because of its monopoly "to the northward"[172], as Tomison concluded.

The poor returns on the Saskatchewan may have been due in part to the disaffection of Umphreville and Holmes who were probably hot in a mood to exert themselves on behalf of a company that they felt had mistreated them. The root of their discontent appears to have been the local victory of Pangman who had been given control over the most lucrative part of the trade in the area. To Holmes it was especially galling to see his loyalty rewarded in this way[173]. Umphreville was undoubtedly angered by losing

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[170]H.B.A., B121/a/2, Manchester House Journal, May 25, 1788.

[171]Lamb, 34.

[172]H.B.A., B121/a/2, Manchester House Journal, April 20, 1788.

[173]Tomison described him as being "highly exasperated against his Partnership for the ill treatment he has received from them this last Year." Ibid., May 22, 1788.

command of a post and by being forced to idle away the winter in a minor post with hopes of advancement receding[174].

In the spring both Holmes and Umphreville left the country after discussing with Tomison the possibility of taking employment with the Hudson's Bay Company[175].

In the fall of 1788 the North West Company was alone with the Hudson's Bay Company on Pine Island. Documentation on its fortunes in the ensuing year is almost totally absent as the government of Canada had relinquished its policy of issuing licenses or permits. It is clear that the North West Company embarked on a policy of retrenchment in an attempt to achieve a clear profit after several years of high costs and disappointing returns[176]. Certainly its financial situation in 1788 was not very encouraging. Returns from the 1787 outfit little more than covered the prime cost of goods shipped to Grand Portage. (See Table 1.) To make matters worse, the fur

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[174]It was probably during this winter that Umphreville wrote the second part of his book *On the Present State of Hudson Bay*, which in contrast to the first part is dritical of the North West Company and complimentary towards the Hudson's Bay Company.

[175]Tomison wrote to London on behalf of both of them. Holmes apparently never carried through, choosing instead to sell his share in the North West Company and retire. His decision may have been forced on him by ill health as he died a few years later on August 17, 1792 in Montreal. Umphreville did approach the Company in London but was not willing to accept the terms they offered him.

[176]P.A.C. MG 19 A5 Letter Book of Joseph Frobisher, Letter to John Brickwood, June 30, 1788.

sale situation was still uncertain and there were heavy demands on cash to pay for goods.

The circumstances under which the agreement had been reached with Gregory-McLeod had been such as to prevent any reorganization and rationalization the previous year and there were undoubtedly surplus men and a substantial quantity of goods remaining. It is therefore likely that the investment in goods was substantially reduced and that many of the *engagés* were not rehired. The retrenchment probably also included attempts to raise the standard of trade in areas where they held an effective monopoly and to cut out excessive liberality in areas where they still had to compete.

On the North Saskatchewan River, retrenchment was reflected by the closure of the post on the Battle River reducing the North West Company to two permanent posts, one on Pine Island and one on the South Saskatchewan River, both closely opposed by posts of the Hudson's Bay Company. Although the two companies were now free to concentrate all of their competitive forces on each other, 1788-89 appears to have been something of a breather for both of them. In contrast to the previous two years there is not one single reference to competition with the Canadians in the journals of Manchester House for this year[177]. Although it is always somewhat risky to argue

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[177]H.B.A., D121/a/3, Manchester House Journal, 1788-89.

from negative evidence this would seem to suggest that competition was on a very low-key level.

The policy was clearly successful for the North West Company. Overall returns rose to approximately £40,000 and with the greatly reduced expenses for the year the profit on the outfit was undoubtedly very substantial. It is likely that the cash picture was also improved as they were able to balance high current returns against low current expenditures. Both of these would act to improve their ability to attract credit, which was absolutely necessary for them to finance further expansion.

The Hudson's Bay Company also benefited greatly from the reduced competition. Without substantial increases in either manpower or stock (see Table 2 and Table 4), Tomison enjoyed his most successful season as Chief inland, with inland returns of more than 16,000 MB. There is no indication of the actual Manchester House returns. Profits based on subsequent sales of furs from York Factory rose from slightly over £6,600 to almost £10,000 (see Figure 7). Despite these improvements, Tomison was concerned about the growing strength of the North West Company as well as the continuing crisis in manpower and trade goods in the York Factory. Smarting under implied accusations that he was on cosy relations with the Canadian traders he was not in a happy mood as he paddled down to the Bay prepared to return to England to plead his case

directly with the proprietors[178].

Part 3 The Fur Trade and the Indians, 1786-89

One of the main problems which must be faced in trying to identify and analyze the changing nature of relationships between the traders and the Indians is the paucity of direct source material. This is especially true when considering the earliest years of intensive contact along the Saskatchewan valley and its hinterland. The surviving documents reveal only the perceptions of the fur traders and, with a few exceptions, only the employees of the Hudson's Bay Company. In the case of the Pine Island posts the only direct evidence is contained in the journals of Manchester House and, to a lesser extent, letters and other journals from the same period. Consequently it will be necessary to resort on occasion to arguments based on interpolation or extrapolation from available data.

As indicated in the previous chapter, there is evidence to suggest that all of the Indians who came in to trade with any of the companies in the early 1780's were joined together in a common alliance. This argument is supported in part by lack of references in existing

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[178] H.B.A., A11/117, London Inward Correspondence from York Factory, Letter from William Tomison, July 22, 1789.

sources to any coherent pattern of hostile actions between any of the trading Indians. This is not to argue that disputes did not break out from time to time, nor is it to suggest that there was a community of interest which must inevitably or permanently link them together. There were, to the contrary, significant changes taking place which must have been placing strains on the alliance.

First and foremost of these was the establishment, for the first time on a permanent basis, of trading posts far enough up the North Saskatchewan River to make them readily accessible to the westernmost tribes in the alliance. This development destroyed forever the established role of many Cree and Assiniboine Indians as middlemen. With direct access to both European trade goods and the horse trading centres on the Missouri, the Blackfoot, Blood and Piegan Indians, along with those who might ally themselves with them, were in a position where they could expand their influence and wealth at the expense of the Cree and Assiniboine who were moving into the eastern and northern borders of the plains. In 1786, no split along these lines had yet occurred, but in 1787 the first cracks started to appear.

In the middle of July a large band of Cree and Sarcee Indians arrived and camped near Pine Island. They had just returned from warring against the Blood Indians where they killed several women and children, bringing back

some of the children as slaves[179]. Fearing that this action would prevent the Blood and Piegan Indians from coming in to trade, the Hudson's Bay men were very relieved when a party of Piegan Indians arrived late in August on a mission of peace. As Longmoor described their errand,

> their chief business is to make it up between the Blood Indians and the Crees and Sussee Indians to be at peace and all to come to the House as before.[180]

Apparently the peace mission was at least partially successful, for the Blood and Piegan did come in the following spring without incident. The peace seems to have been uneasy however, as they joined forces when they came in 1789, presumably for mutual protection. For the time being their main concern was still war against the Snake Indians who bordered them to the south[181].

Another possible source of friction was the continuing process of displacement which was largely a result of the fur trade and indeed was positively encouraged by the traders. For generations the Cree and Assiniboine

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[179]H.B.A., B121/a/2, Manchester House Journal, July 9-16, 1787.

[180]Ibid., August 24, 1787. This was probably the same incident as that referred to by Edward Umphreville in his account of the Sarcee Indians. Wallace, *Present State of Hudson's Bay*, 103.

[181]A Piegan Indian who came in to trade with Tomison in the spring of 1788 told him that they had been at war with the Snake Indians and planned to go again in the summer. H.B.A., B121/a/2, Manchester House Journal, March 25, 1788.

had been moving westward along the fringes of the northern forests in search of fresh hunting territories. This process was still very much under way but now they were beginning to threaten the territories of such former allies as the Fall Indians or Atsina and the Blackfoot and Blood. In response to the growing requirements of the traders for provisions, the parkland and adjacent meadowlands became more attractive habitats. It seems likely that many of the Cree and Assiniboine who had formerly been closely associated with the traders were encouraged to hunt for provisions. This would have had the effect of encouraging them to displace Indians already in the best hunting areas who were not so dependent on trade goods and therefore were not as dependable suppliers of provisions[182]. If this hypothesis were correct, one would expect that the Canadian traders would have been most forward in such encouragement as their need for provisions was greatest. One would also expect the process to accelerate in 1785 with the great expansion of requirements which accompanied the entry of powerful new companies into the fur trade.

Direct evidence that the Canadian traders at Pine Island did encourage former trading Indians to hunt provisions is difficult to find. It is evident, however, that the majority of the Stone Indians and many of the Cree were closely allied with them. Between 1786 and 1789 close

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[182]This process is described in some detail in Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade*, 128-135.

to half of the Assiniboine coming to trade at Manchester were Swampy Ground Assiniboine who were fur hunting specialists. (See Table 6.) Although many of the Cree traded at Manchester House there is seldom any indication of what areas they frequented and it is not possible to determine what proportion may have been in the process of adopting a Plains culture. This negative evidence could be interpreted to mean that Plains Cree and Assiniboine did not yet have a foothold in the area or that they were closer to posts at the Battle River or on the South Branch and traded there instead, and to a certain degree this was undoubtedly true. The evidence is more direct and convincing for the Blackfoot and Fall Indians, both of which were major suppliers of provisions. The Blackfoot came in to Manchester House very infrequently despite the fact that they lived in the area, and when they did so on at least one occasion, they were "deluded" away by the Canadians[183]. The Fall Indians only traded with the English in one of the three years and all of them went first to Pangman's house[184].

In the spring and summer there was a string of violent incidents among the Indians which were serious

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[183]H.B.A., B121/a/1, Manchester House Journal, November 22, 1786.

[184]H.B.A., B121/a/2, Manchester House Journal, November 21, 1787.

Table 6:

FREQUENCY OF TRADING VISITS AT MANCHESTER HOUSE[1]

Year	1786-87	1787-88	1788-89	1789-90	1790-91	1791-92	1792-93
Assiniboine	2	2	5	9	6	8	7
Swampy Ground Assiniboine	0	4	2	0	1	0	0
Blackfoot	1	0	2	6	6	9	5
Blood	1	2	2	1	3	5	1
Cree	2	5	1	17	7	4	11
Fall (Gros Ventres)	0	2	0	1	1	5	7
Piegan	1	2	1	2	3	3	0
Sarcee	2	3	5	7	3	3	0
Unspecified[2]	21	12	15	8	25	15	2

[1]Based on H.B.A., B121/a/1-8, Manchester House Journals, 1786-93. Figures include only trading visits between October and May of each trading season.

[2]Most of these were local Indians, probably Cree.

enough to convince Tomison that it would not be "prudent to leave men so high up in the Country"[185] and Manchester House was closed down for the summer. Most of these disputes involved the Fall Indians and Cree from the south branch area. The first fight occurred within sight of Holmes' Battle River post where a small trading party of Fall Indians was attacked by a large band of Plains Cree.

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[185]Ibid., May 2, 1788.

It was not an even contest. After the Cree killed the leading man among the Atsina

> they cut off his arms, head, private parts, took out his bowels, then took what furs they had not traded from them.[186]

This action must have made as much impression on the Fall Indians as it did on Edward Umphreville, the trader who reported it to Tomison.

In an attempt to restore order and prevent a full-scale conflict between the Fall Indians and the Cree, Pangman attempted to play the part of the peacemaker. He sent out rum as a present to the Fall Indians and was able to convince them to come in to discuss a peace. The next day, Tomison noted in his journal,

> Mr. Pangman's peace making has come to a Quarrel amongst themselves by which a horse has been killed, a gun broken and another horse taken in lieu of the one killed, and I am of Opinion the affair will not end here.[187]

Tomison was certainly a man of few words and one can hardly imagine a more tantalizing summary of a council which tragically failed to lay the basis for a peaceful settlement, for indeed Tomison was right in his conclusion. Sometime during the summer, a battle occurred in which the same Cree inflicted serious losses on the Fall Indians forcing them to retreat out onto the plains[188].

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[186]Ibid., May 1, 1788.

[187]Ibid., May 5, 1788.

[188]H.B.A., B121/a/3, Manchester House Journal, September 11, 1788.

They did not venture to come in to trade again at Pine Island until the spring of 1790.

Although the immediate cause of the incident which led to this conflict is not clear, the underlying cause was probably the competition for resources between the two groups who both occupied the parkland and prairie near South Branch House. It is tempting to suggest that conflict broke out at this time because of the provision requirements of the traders, especially the Canadians. Both groups were apparently customers of the North West Company and it seems likely both had been encouraged to hunt provisions, at least for part of the year. So long as hunting was good and the needs of the Canadians were expanding, conflict might be avoided. The amalgamation of the two main Canadian Companies led to a substantial reduction in their requirements. This must have placed strains on their relationship with Indians they had encouraged to hunt buffalo, and on relationships between Indians competing for a dwindling market. In any event, the Cree were the clear winners of this round and the way was clear for them to consolidate their hold on the prairies west of the South Saskatchewan River and to expand their role as suppliers of provisions to the traders.

The movement of some of the Cree out onto the grasslands paralleled similar processes which were also

occurring elsewhere around the fringes of the plains [189]. Both the Cree and the Assiniboine split into two cultural groups in the process, one retaining its ties with the forests and the other developing what came to be known as the Plains Culture. The Sarcee was another, much smaller group, which appears to have had a similar choice of options open to it at this time. A remnant of the Dene family, they had either split off from or had been cut off from the closely related Beaver and Sekani Indians of the Peace River basin. In 1786 they lived far up the North Saskatchewan River within the foothill forests where they were coming into increasing contact with the Cree and perhaps advance parties of the Swampy Ground Assiniboine as well. Occupying the parklands and plains to the south of them were the Blood Indians.

We have seen how the Sarcee, in alliance with the Cree, had alrady come into conflict with the Blood Indians. They were a small group and apparently at this time found protection in a close alliance with the Cree Indians. They were not united amongst themselves, however, a fact that was demonstrated in the spring of 1788 when word reached Tomison that they had quarreled amongst themselves so violently that they had split into two groups with one finding refuge with the Cree[190]. The course taken

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[189]Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade*, 94-104.

[190]H.B.A., B121/a/2, April 12, 16 and 18, 1788.

by the rest of the Sarcee is not indicated but it is tempting to suggest they may have found protection in an alliance with the Blood Indians and a move south along the foothills, in line with the known pattern in subsequent years.

The relationships between the traders and the Indians were also beginning to show some signs of strain. Reference has already been made to the impact of the lavish use of alcohol and other competitive practices. Violence was always a possibility and the use of liquor added an element of instability which tended to encourage it. The Hudson's Bay Company had managed to avoid any serious confrontations with the Indians. It is possible this could have been due to a higher degree of probity in their dealings with them. Another factor was probably the relative degree of cultural separation maintained by the English company as compared with the Canadians. Under the impact of competition and inland conditions however, the amount of difference between the approaches of the Canadians and the Englishmen was narrowing. As we have seen, Tomison was quite as ready to engage in sharp practices as his opponents, and although he personally abhored the use of liquor, he was even more concerned with expanding his trade. Although there is little direct evidence to go on, it is also likely that an increasing number of the men had contracted liaisons with Indian women. This was almost certainly the case with those who habitually wintered

on the plains or with the Indians.

With growing contact on a day-to-day basis, the possibility of friction increases. It is to the credit of all of the traders that they maintained generally good relations with the Indians. Nevertheless, the death of one Canadian and a near miss for some of the Hudson's Bay men who were fired on by some Blackfoot Indians in the summer of 1787[191] demonstrated their vulnerability. With the unsettled conditions the following spring, Tomison did not hesitate to close down Manchester House for the summer, withdrawing his men to Hudson House. The season of 1788-89 seems to have been relatively quiet, in part because exceptionally heavy snowfalls caused the Indians some distress. Even so one senses in the journals a growing concern for vigilance when the Indians were close by and some nervousness about the changing moods of their Indian customers.

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[191]Ibid., June 29, 1787.

CHAPTER THREE

THE MIDDLE YEARS--1789 to 1792

Part 1 The struggle for supremacy--The North West Company versus the Hudson's Bay Company

In 1789 a new phase was opened in the struggle between the Hudson's Bay Company and the Canadian traders for control of the fur trade in the "Grand North". In an attempt to break the monopoly that the North West Company had achieved in the English River and Athabasca Districts, the Governor and Committee of the Hudson's Bay Company had devised a bold new plan of attack. They began to implement this plan in the fall of 1789. The North West Company responded by increasing their pressure on areas where they were already competing with the English traders. The first years of this round were critical in shaping the eventual outcome of this phase of the long contest.

In the summer of 1789, Philip Turnor[1] arrived on board the *King George* at York Fort, bearing a commission to undertake an expedition to establish an English presence in the Athabasca country. The plan was based on advice received in earlier years from William Tomison[2] but was doubtless worked out in detail the previous winter by the Committee with the help of Turnor and two other officers who were home on furlough, George Hudson and Charles Isham[3].

Briefly the plan was based on the use of Cumberland House as a jumping-off point into the north using the transportation routes and techniques pioneered by the Canadians. The posts in the buffalo country, South

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[1]Philip Turnor, who came from Laleham in the County of Middlesex, was hired by the Hudson's Bay Company as a surveyor in 1778 upon the recommendation of Mr. William Wales of Christ's Hospital. Turnor made the first accurate survey of the Saskatchewan and Nelson River system up as far as Hudson House in his first year with the Company and then travelled down to Moose Factory where he served for several years as surveyor and trader. He was rehired in 1789 for a term of three years to act as Inland Surveyor in charge of the proposed northern expedition. Tyrrell, *Journals of Hearne and Turnor*, 60-94.

[2]H.B.A., A11/116, London Inward Correspondence from York Factory, Letter from William Tomison, August 24, 1786.

[3]Charles Thomas Isham was the natural son of the former Governor of York Factory, James Isham. Born at the fort, he went to England with his father when he retired and was sent back to the Bay in 1766, when he was only eleven years old, to serve as an apprentice. For the next seven years he was at Severn and York Fort as the ward of Andrew Graham. In 1775 he was sent inland as a labourer and spent most of the rest of his lengthy career at a succession of inland posts. Although listed as an inland trader, he had not yet, in 1789, been entrusted with command of a post of his own. Tyrrell, *Journals of Hearne and Turnor*, 173 n.2.

Branch House and Manchester House, were to concentrate more of their attention on the procurement of dried provisions to be shipped down to Cumberland House for the use of the northern expedition. Charles Isham was instructed to establish a post south of Cumberland House in the Swan River region, an area where large birch trees were available to build large canoes in the Canadian manner for use in the north. The choicest goods were to be placed at the disposal of Turnor who was to head up the northern expedition with the assistance of young Thomas Staynor[4], and George Hudson, who was to be responsible for the trading aspect of the project. The Committee concluded their instructions with the plea that

> the greatest zeal and attention be given in every way to further these views . . . in order to push into the Canadian north track and to the utmost extent they have reached.[5]

From the beginning the project did not proceed as planned. Turnor and his colleagues failed to arrive at Cumberland House early enough to make a start in 1789. Shortages of provisions and trade goods, men and canoes

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[4]Thomas Staynor, from the City of London, had been hired in 1787 at the age of 17 to be writer and assistant at Churchill at a wage of £30 per year for five years. To merit such a high starting wage he must have come to the Company with high recommendations. In the winter of 1788-89 the Company had decided that he would be surveyor and assistant to Philip Turnor on the northern expedition. H.B.A., A32/3, Servants Contracts, 1776-91.

[5]H.B.A., A6/14, London Correspondence Outward, Letter to William Tomison and the York Factory Council, May 27, 1789.

were all major problems. As Cumberland House was not a large settlement at this time it was not well supplied with either men or goods. When the inland brigade passed through it left few, if any, usable canoes. Its servants were the dregs of the inland establishment, men unable to unwilling to pull their weight in the canoes. Coming inland in the fall Turnor's party was reduced to using old canoes which had been left behind at the Bay and a limited number of experienced men. Many of his men were so disaffected they had stayed at the Fort with the intention of returning to England. Any plan based upon the use of such resources was doomed to fail.

Through the winter months, the men who had been charged with carrying out the Northern Expedition marked time. Isham sat at Cumberland House, prevented from establishing a separate post by Hudson who was attempting to hold on to as many of the goods as possible for his own use[6]. Nothing was done therefore to provide the necessary special canoes. Turnor grew increasingly frustrated. As the winter passed he saw no signs of improvement in his circumstances. Thomas Staynor had continued on to Manchester House in hopes of joining the party which habitually wintered with the Piegan Indians near the Rocky Mountains, but he arrived too late and spent the winter at Man-

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[6]H.B.A., A11/117, London Inward Correspondence from York Factory, Letter from Charles Thomas Isham, July 23, 1790.

chester House instead[7]. In his absence, Turnor spent a good deal of time with the invalided David Thompson teaching him mathematical and surveying skills. George Hudson was afflicted by a lingering illness. As a result he shunned the company of his fellow officers and secretly consumed large quantities of liquor. When he died on April 19, 1790 there was hardly a drop of trade liquor left in the House[8].

While the Hudson's Bay Company was making the first faltering steps towards an attempt to end the Canadians' northern monopoly, the North West Company was increasing its competitive pressure on the English company. Under the vigorous leadership of William McGillivray they had invaded the Rat Country east of Cumberland House[9] and were beginning to cut into the trade at York Fort itself, much to the concern of both William Tomison and Joseph Colen[10]. In 1789 they increased greatly the pressure on the Saskatchewan River posts, especially Manchester House, when Angus Shaw, now in the employ on the North West Company, established a post at Moose Lake. Although an outpost of the English River district it was located within

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[7]H.B.A., B121/a/5, Journal of Thomas Staynor, 1789-90.

[8]H.B.A., B121/a/4, Manchester House Journal, Letter from Malcholm Ross to William Walker, May 12, 1790.

[9]Morton, 439-443.

[10]H.B.A., A11/117, London Inward Correspondence from York Factory, Letter from William Tomison, July 22, 1789.

easy reach of the valley of the North Saskatchewan River and in the heart of the hunting territory of many of the Wood Cree and Swampy Ground Assiniboine who formerly traded at Pine Island. The threat that the English might be planning to invade their northern preserve merely increased their determination to increase the competitive pressure[11].

Manchester House in 1789-90 was under new management. William Tomison had returned to England in the summer of 1789 leaving William Walker in charge of the inland trade. Walker was initially instructed to stay on at South Branch, which was centrally located between Cumberland House and Manchester House, and James Tate was elevated from the ranks and appointed to be master at Manchester House[12]. As soon as Walker received word that Tomison had left for England, he changed the arrangement and went up to Manchester House himself, leaving a man of his choice, Mitchell Oman, as master at South Branch House[13]. By doing so he was in a better position to keep an eye on Peter Pangman. Furthermore he was in charge of the post which brought in the greater part of the trade in furs and, therefore, yielded the highest bounties.

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[11]H.B.A., F3/1, North West Company Correspondence, Letter from Roderick McKenzie to Angus Shaw, August 29, 1792.

[12]H.B.A., B239/b/49, York Factory Country Correspondence, Letter from Joseph Colen to William Walker, July 24, 1789.

[13]H.B.A., B121/a/4, Manchester House Journal, October 22, 1789.

Despite competition from both Shaw and Pangman, Walker did such a booming business that he was virtually out of trade goods by spring. The reasons for this are not entirely clear. Trade with the Blood and Piegan Indians fell to a new low. The practice of sending out men to winter with them seemed to be losing its effectiveness for Pangman (without going to the same trouble) received almost as many furs from them[14]. In addition the Comparative Standard of Trade had been changed, reducing the value of wolf pelts from 2 MB to 1 MB[15]. As wolves made up the majority of the furs traded by the plains Indians, this tended to reduce the official valuation of their trade.

New rules had been instituted by the Company which hampered Walker's ability to adjust the actual trading standard through the manipulation of the overplus system. Presumably because they suspected that Tomison had been diverting overplus returns to Canada, the Committee ordered that detailed records be kept of the goods given out in return for specific furs. In attempting to abide by these regulations, Walker in effect unilaterially raised

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[14]Ibid., March 16, 1790.

[15]The change was ordered in 1788, but due to problems in getting the packet in to Manchester House that fall, the change was not implemented at the inland posts until 1789. H.B.A., A6/14, London Correspondence Outward, Letter to William Tomison and the York Factory Council, May 1788. H.B.A., A11/117, London Inward Correspondence from York Factory, Letter from the York Factory Council, September 8, 1789.

the costs of goods for those who brought in wolves, and furthermore did not have sufficient overplus to draw upon to make presents when necessary. Walker concluded that the result would be to drive customers away[16].

It would appear that Walker was able to increase trade by bringing in new customers, some of whom had formerly traded at South Branch House[17]. The journals of Manchester House for the winter indicate that larger numbers of Assiniboine and Cree were coming in, and many seem to have been from the plains. In addition Walker recorded that the Fall Indians came in large numbers for the first time, and the Blackfoot made frequent visits throughout the winter. In the spring Walker and his men carried out 190 packs of furs[18], the largest total yet obtained at Manchester House. Despite poor results at Cumberland House, total inland returns were over 16,000 MB[19].

One thing seems clear. The increase in trade at Manchester House was not won at the expense of the North West Company. Pangman sent out from the Forts des Prairies 283 packs of furs[20]. This was a big increase over his

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[16]H.B.A., B121/a/4, Manchester House Journal, March 13, 1790.

[17]Ibid., February 27, 1790.

[18]IBid., May 1 to May 25, 1790.

[19]See Table 3.

[20]Lamb, 441.

total of 200 two years earlier, despite inroads from the efforts of Angus Shaw. Assuming that the North West Company packs contained an average of 60 MB in furs, Pangman's returns represented approximately 17,000 MB, almost 1,000 more than those obtained by the English company.

In spite of his orders to concentrate on acquiring more dried provisions for the supply of the Northern Expedition, Walker does not appear to have done so. A number of reasons can be suggested for this. Shortages of tobacco and other goods during the summer of 1789 had prevented the men left at Manchester from acquiring even the normal requirements[21]. The summer was the usual season for the purchase of dried meat. When provisions again became available in the spring of 1790, Walker was so short of trading goods, especially tobacco and ammunition, that he had to stop the purchase of provisions in order to preserve enough of these articles to support the post for the summer[22]. In effect, a substantial increase in the purchase of dried meat could only have been achieved through an increase in the supply of trade goods or a conscious decision to purchase meat instead of furs with the limited goods available. The first option was not possible as there were not sufficient goods inland. The

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[21]H.B.A., B121/a/4, Manchester House Journal, Letter from William Walker to Mitchell Oman, December 11, 1789.

[22]Ibid., April 4 and May 24, 1790.

second option was not likely as the performance of traders was measured only in terms of furs or other salable produce, and bounties were paid only on furs. It was not in Walker's self-interest to take action which would restrict his trade in furs.

When Walker arrived at Cumberland House he found the situation to be far from satisfactory. The post was almost out of victuals as they lacked brandy, the usual currency used to purchase provisions from the Indians[23]. Accordingly, the pemmican and brandy that he had brought down with him were required for immediate consumption. Furthermore, he had no men or canoes to spare for any other project as he did not have enough of either to carry down all of the furs at Cumberland House[24]. Lacking men, canoes, goods and provisions, Turnor had but two choices, to stay at Cumberland House for the summer, or to give up the whole idea and return to England. He chose the former course, staying at Cumberland where he instructed Peter Fidler, who had spent the winter as writer for Mitchell Oman at South Branch House, in the art of surveying. Thomas Staynor, after a winter at Manchester House, had decided he wished to follow a career as trader rather than

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[23]H.B.A., A11/117, London Inward Correspondence from York Factory, Letter from William Walker, July 25, 1790.

[24]Upwards of 4,000 MB in furs had to be left at Cumberland House. Ibid., Letter from the York Factory Council, September 4, 1790.

explorer and returned to York Fort from whence he was sent to be second-in-command at Churchill. David Thompson was never seriously considered for the assignment to replace Staynor as Turnor's assistant because he was still seriously handicapped by his lame leg.

In the summer of 1790 it soon became obvious that the temper of the men had not improved over previous years. Although they apparently were now convinced that they would have nothing to gain by holding out for higher wages, they had proved to be balky workers the previous winter. At Manchester House, James Gaddy, James Tate and William Walker had all had their problems. Gaddy, who had been master during the summer of 1789 had found his men to be indolent[25]. When Tate took over the fall he had great difficulty in getting any men to accompany Gaddy to winter with the Blood and Piegan Indians. In their view it was a long way off and the Indians used them badly[26]. William Walker seems to have had the greatest trouble with the Orcadian servants.

In previous years Walker had blamed his troubles with the men on Tomison's interference and covert sympathy for the men. Now he was on his own. As the winter went on Walker made frequent comments about the intractable na-

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[25]H.B.A., B121/a/4, Manchester House Journal, Letter from William Walker to Mitchell Oman, December 11, 1789.

[26]Ibid., October 19-20, 1789.

ture of the men.

> there is a great many of your honour's servants takes . . . liberties.[27]

> they are still worse and worse behaving.[28]

The situation reached a peak in April when Walker ordered one of the men to assist Magnus Twatt in bending timbers for canoes. When the man refused, Walker backed down, powerless to enforce his will. In essence the man was refusing to do what he regarded as extra duty. Canoe builders received higher wages, and most of the men refused to help on the building of canoes unless they were given the higher wage rate. The men were united in believing that they should not be asked to do something unless they were being paid for it, while Walker was of the opinion that the men should be required to do "any duty they are fit for that is lawful and right."[29]

Walker found that he did not get along any better with the Canadian employees than with the Orkneymen. They too held the view, accepted by the North West Company, that the amount and type of work should be regulated by custom, with additional duties duly compensated. From the beginning he admitted to having a very "indifferent Opinion of the best of them" and refused to take any

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[27]Ibid., Letter from William Walker to Mitchell Oman, December 11, 1789.

[28]Ibid., April 19, 1790.

[29]Ibid.

more into the service, claiming that he did not have authority to do so[30]. In the spring he wrote to London complaining that

> the General run of them is a parcel of Shifting Fellows and the Lesser concern you Honors have with such I am Certain will be Better for your Enterests:[31]

It is likely that the disillusionment of the few Canadians in the Company's employ began at this time.

The prejudice against the Canadians was shared by the men, and Colen had great difficulty in convincing any of the men to go inland with them again[32]. Nevertheless it was generally a quiet time at York Fort. Although some of the men tried to hold out for better contract terms, in the end they all agreed to the standard offers or a continuation of the same wage level for at least another year. Despite the fact that there were no retirements among the inland complement the number of men assigned to the posts up the Saskatchewan River was drastically reduced. The previous year, 47 men with sixteen canoes filled with trade goods were sent inland[33]. In the summer of 1790, Walker was reduced to 34 men in eleven

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[30]Ibid., September 17, 1789.

[31]Ibid., April 19, 1790.

[32]H.B.A., B239/a/90, York Factory Journal, July 20, 1790.

[33]H.B.A., B239/a/89, York Factory Journal, July 23-25, 1789. This figure does not include the men and canoes that went inland with Turnor in the fall.

canoes, and out of these he had to supply the northern expedition with both men and canoes[34].

Joseph Colen, with the support of Charles Isham, had taken advantage of the absence of Tomison and Turnor to put into effect plans to drive the Canadians out of the "Rat Country" between the Nelson and Churchill Rivers, where their activities were eating into the trade of York Fort itself. Needless to say this competition adversely affected Colen's pocketbook. Isham went inland with four large canoes and some of the best steersmen and canoe builders to establish a post at the Swan River. At the same time, twenty experienced men and seven canoes were held back to be used in establishing a new settlement up the Nelson River to protect the immediate hinterland of York Fort[35].

The action taken by Colen, although tactically sound as a response to Canadian trading pressure, could only succeed at the expense of the existing trade up the Saskatchewan River and the hoped-for Northern Expedition. Given the quantity of manpower, canoes and trade goods available to them, the Hudson's Bay Company could have attempted one new scheme in addition to the Saskatchewan

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[34]H.B.A., B239/a/90, York Factory Journal, July 27, 1790. Twelve of Walker's men were new men with no inland experience while four of the best men and two canoes were assigned to the northern expedition.

[35]Ibid., July 29 to September 7, 1790.

River posts but resources were not adequate to support two. Colen must have been aware of this but, as he stood to gain from neither of the other two programmes, it is understandable that he looked after his interests first.

When the *King George* arrived at York Fort at the end of August, Colen must have been disappointed to find that Tomison had returned with a fresh commission and a renewed mandate from the Governor and Committee in London. One organizational change had been made, however, as Colen was given a virtually independent command over the affairs of York Fort itself[36]. In essence this meant that no one in the York Factory was to be given overall authority, a situation sure to aggravate the differences between the needs and ambitions of Turnor, Colen and Tomison. Each was convinced that his own sphere of interest ought to be paramount. The result was that none of them received what to their minds were the necessary resources to fulfill their assignments.

Tomison was greatly angered by what he found upon his arrival. Taking possession of the best of the men and canoes remaining at the Fort, he headed inland with a fresh cargo of goods[37]. Even with the four canoes he took with him he still did not have as many as had

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[36]H.B.A., A5/3, London Letters Outward, Letter to Joseph Colen, May, 1790.

[37]H.B.A., B239/a/90, York Factory Journal, September 4, 1790.

been sent in the previous year (see Table 2). After supplying Philip Turnor and his men, as well as the other existing settlements, Manchester House was left with only half the stock of goods that it had the previous year[38]. Tomison's disillusionment with the support he was receiving began to grow.

When he left England he must have felt hopeful about future prospects. Substantial increases were contemplated in the number of men assigned to York Factory. The nominal level was to be set at 160, one-third greater than it had been only three years earlier[39]. Another large cargo of trade goods was sent out, including a very large shipment of fresh Brazil tobacco. The Company was assured that it was of the highest quality and would go far to redeem its reputation, damaged by earlier shortages and bad quality[40]. While in England he had spoken on behalf of the Orkney labourers and, although not successful in gaining all he had hoped for them, he gained the concession that henceforth, they would be paid from the moment they stepped on board ship at Stromness. Their pay, however, would still end when they left shore at the

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[38]H.B.A., B121/a/6, Manchester House Journal, November 10, 1790.

[39]H.B.A., A6/14, London Correspondence Outward, Letter to William Tomison, Joseph Colen and the York Factory Council, May 1790.

[40]H.B.A., A5/3, London Letters Outward, Letter to William Tomison, May 1790.

Bay on their return[41]. Finally he was doubtless pleased with the scheme to mount an effective opposition to the Canadians in the Athabasca country.

While the boat was anchored at Stromness, Tomison became aware that a number of the families of his men were in a state of great financial distress as they had not received their customary payments. It had been customary for many years for the men to make out bills on their accounts which would be paid out by the ships' captains when they stopped at Stromness. The captains would then collect from the Company in London. For some reason, the captain had failed to make these payments in 1789. In order to tide the families over, Tomison advanced them money out of his own pocket, submitting his receipts to Andrew Graham who had been appointed by the Company to act as an agent or go-between in the payment of bills drawn directly on the men's accounts in London[42].

When Tomison arrived at York Fort he found that the highly touted new shipment of tobacco was even worse than the tobacco damaged by spring floods at the Fort several years earlier. In a letter written to the Governor and Committee, Tomison averred that he felt like re-

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[41]Ibid., Letter to William Tomison, December 26, 1789. The Committee accepted the argument that "they go out to serve the Company but they come home to serve themselves."

[42]H.B.A., A11/117, London Inward Correspondence from York Factory, Letter from the York Factory Council, September 4, 1790.

turning back to England immediately rather than face the ridicule of Indians and Canadians who might well say that he "went home to fetch tobacco to poison the Indians instead of cherishing them."[43] Less than 2,000 out of almost 9,000 pounds he inspected was worth keeping and much of it was not worth the cost and trouble of carrying it inland[44]. To make matters worse, when Tomison arrived inland he found that the Canadians had a fresh supply of very high quality Brazil tobacco. It is interesting to note that when the Company investigated what had gone wrong they found that the tobacco had been musty before it was delivered to their warehouse. The rolls were filled with holes left when plugs were removed by previous buyers who had tried it and found it wanting. To add insult to injury, the suppliers of the North West Company were among those who had rejected it. It appears that the Company had suffered a serious loss through inattention to such commonsense details as checking or sampling supplies before purchasing and shiping[45].

The consequence of this was that once again Tomison was faced with inadequate supplies of poor grade tobac-

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[43]Ibid., Letter from William Tomison, August 31, 1790.

[44]Ibid.

[45]H.B.A., A5/3, London Letters Outward, Letters to May, Koppendale and Company, Lisbon, December 15 and 22, 1790. H.B.A., A11/117, London Inward Correspondence from York Factory, Letter from William Tomison, July 22, 1791.

co at Manchester House. Other essential trade goods were also short, especially guns, hatchets and brandy[46], while some small goods like awls and fire steels were missing[47]. To make matters worse, the changes in trading standard made the year before had driven away many old customers. Tomison complained that it would cost more in presents to get them back than any gains that might have been achieved through the higher standard[48]. Costs for provisions were up because the grass all around the posts had been burned and there were no buffalo within easy range[49].

The wily old Orkneyman was not one to give up easily. He resorted to his old practice of having the kegs made smaller and having many small but useful trade goods made by the smith out of used tools or scrap. Awls were manufactured out of nail stock, firesteels out of worn out files, arrow points out of cut up hoops and copper and brass trinkets from useless old pots[50]. The brandy shortage forced him to take a step few other officers

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[46]H.B.A., B121/a/6, Manchester House Journal, December 1, 1790 and January 29, 1791. At the beginning of the winter they had only 120 gallons of brandy which Tomison regarded as "but a small stock to procure provisions for 46 men and furs for the Honourable Co'y".

[47]Ibid., November 10 and 24, 1790.

[48]Ibid., December 24, 1790.

[49]Ibid., December 17, 1790.

[50]Ibid., November 24, 1790. Some of the items referred to were also manufactured by Pangman's men as revealed in excavations at his Pine Island post.

would have dared to attempt. Right after Christmas, and before New Year's Day, he collected all of the brandy in the possession of his men, a meagre but important "nine gallons and three quarts", promising them in compensation one quart at the factory for every pint taken from them[51]. By mid-February they were out of guns and Tomison once again had to borrow both guns and pistols from his men rather than see furs taken to the opposition[52]. Clearly the instructions of the Company in this regard had been largely ignored by Tomison. By the end of April they were completely out of liquor and most other goods. Tomison traded everything he could lay his hands on: the men's blankets, clothes and horses, even his own clothes and personal effects, including a fine sword that the Company had given to him as a special mark of esteem while he had been in London the previous winter[53].

In the spring of the year, Tomison sent out 174 packs of furs, an exceptionally good return, considering his limited resources. Trade with the Blackfoot, Blood and Piegan had shown a marked increase although that with most of the other Indians probably declined (see Figure 8). Three canoes were built at Manchester House during the

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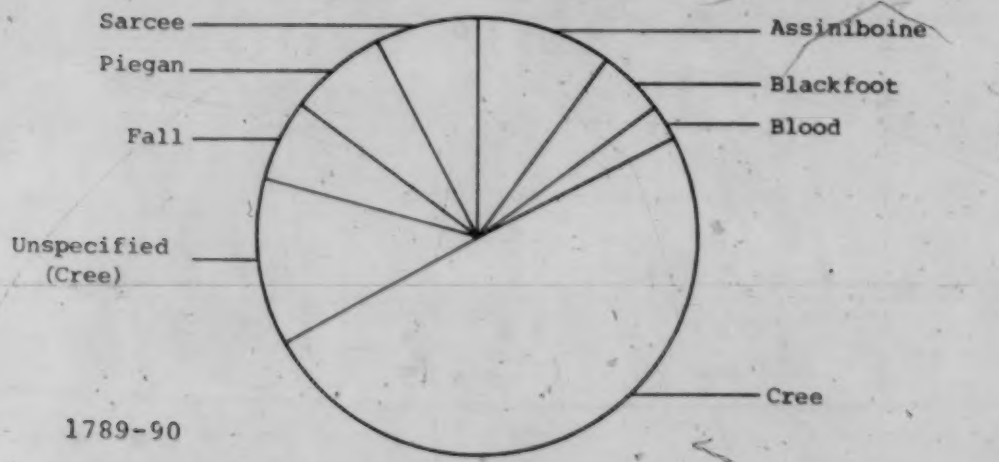
[51]Ibid., January 1, 1791.

[52]Ibid., Letter from William Tomison to William Walker, February 13, 1791.

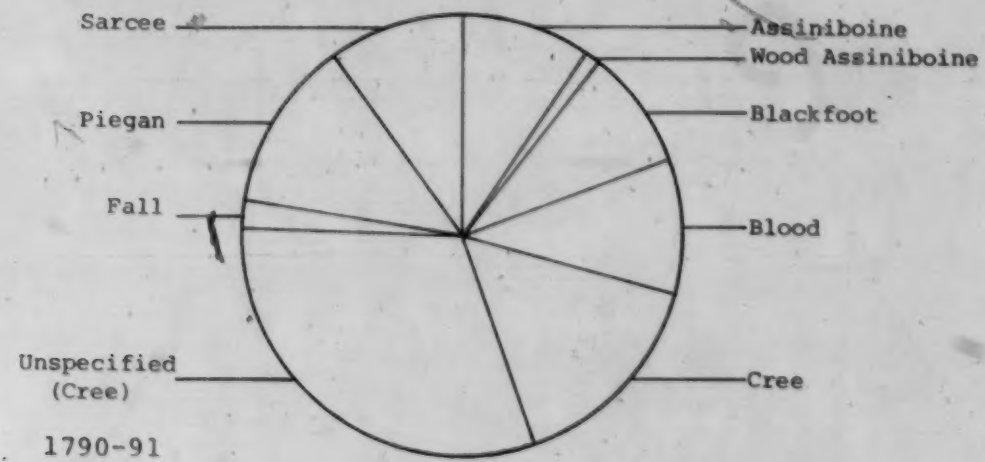
[53]Ibid., May 1, 1791.

Figure 8:

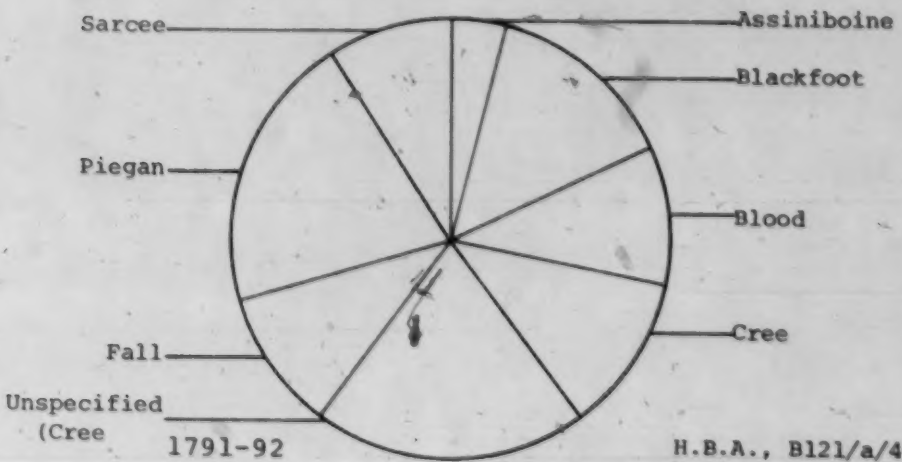
BREAKDOWN OF TRADE AT MANCHESTER HOUSE 1789-92



1789-90



1790-91



1791-92

H.B.A., B121/a/4-7

spring and a record thirteen at all of the inland posts[54]. As a result they were able to carry over 15,000 MB in furs down to York Fort. According to Tomison, almost 6,000 MB still remained at Cumberland House[55].

The North West Company had continued to apply pressure of the English posts on the Saskatchewan and in the Rat Country. Shaw was back at Moose Lake, this time with independence from either the English River or the Forts des Prairies[56]. Pangman had remained at Pine Island although he had seriously considered establishing a new forward base far up the North Saskatchewan River. He had taken the step of going up the river himself, to a point a few miles above the later site of Rocky Mountain House, in search of a suitable site[57]. It is not entirely clear why he did not go ahead with his plans. It may be that he was asked not to do so by his partners in order to avoid conflict with Shaw's territory. Nevertheless he was well supplied with trade goods. Thus it seems likely that he improved his position vis-a-vis Manchester House and the other Saskatchewan River posts. The total returns of the North West Company continued to show improvement. The

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[54]H.B.A., A11/117, Letter from York Factory Council, September 26, 1791.

[55]Ibid., Letter from William Tomison, July 22, 1791.

[56]Lamb, 443.

[57]Ibid., 441; and H.B.A., B121/a/4, Manchester House Journal, April 15, 1790.

average for the years 1790-95 was said to be £72,000[58]. If the actual returns for 1790 were close to the average, the North West Company as a whole for the first time was now approaching the level reached by the Hudson's Bay Company. (See Figure 1).

At York Fort during the summer, tension between Tomison and his fellow officers erupted into bitter confrontation. William Walker, already deeply disappointed by the return of Tomison, was hurt by accusations that he had destroyed the trade at Manchester House by increasing the standard and that he had willingly acquiesced in actions taken by the York Fort Council before Tomison's return which had stripped the Saskatchewan River posts of the best men, canoes and goods[59]. Walker's response was, in effect, that he had only followed orders, and he passed the blame on to Joseph Colen[60]. Tomison appears to have accepted this[61]. Nevertheless, Walker was so upset that he agreed to return inland only when Tomison agreed that he would retire in favour of Walker in the summer of 1793, the end of his current contract[62]. Their quarrel was

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[58]Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada*, 258.

[59]H.B.A., B121/a/6, Letter from William Tomison to William Walker, May 3, 1791.

[60]Ibid., Letter from William Walker to William Tomison, May 8, 1791.

[61]Ibid., Letter from William Tomison to William Walker, May 15, 1791.

[62]H.B.A., B239/a/91, York Factory Journal, July 11, 1791.

patched up, for their interests were essentially the same, but it is likely that Walker continued to harbour resentment against his superior officer.

The most bitter confrontation, however, was the one which was developing between Tomison and Colen. Now that they were essentially equal in power, their conflicting ambitions and views soon made it clear that one of them would eventually have to defer to the other or leave. Both were stubborn and cunning, and the conflict promised to be interesting. For the purpose of this study, it is only relevent to look at the genesis of their conflict and consider how it affected the operations at Manchester House.

As we have seen, Tomison and Colen did not see eye-to-eye on the identification of priorities for expansion of the Company's activities. Tomison had always supported the idea of expanding into the English River and Athabasca areas via Cumberland House. There is no evidence that he had changed his mind. Colen accepted it, only because it was the will of the Governor and Committee in London. But his main concern was the Canadian encroachment into the Rat Country. This he regarded as a higher priority than the maintenance of Manchester House[63]. His scheme to establish a post up the Nelson River the pre-

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[63]H.B.A., A11/117, London Inward Correspondence from York Factory, Letter from Joseph Colen, September 24, 1791.

ious fall had come apart at the seams. He blamed the poor results on Tomison for taking the best men and canoes inland in the fall, but poor planning and management were also factors. There was no good reason for waiting until autumn to send in at least an advance party. Nor was it wise to trust the management of the project to a young English clerk who had no experience inland. It would appear that it was more convenient to blame Tomison. Colen was not a happy man when the inland canoes arrived at York Fort on June 29, 1791[64].

For his part, Tomison was not in any mood to suffer similar difficulties again. Standing on his rights to have the pick of the men and the goods, Tomison made sure that he got the best of what was available[65]. In the process he angered both Colen and Charles Isham, master of the Swan River settlement. The only recourse that Colen had was to accept the situation and to write a lengthy letter back to London, imputing a variety of mean and petty motives to explain Tomison's actions[66]. For the time being, however, these accusations had no effect and Tomison and Walker returned inland with 53 men and eighteen large canoes loaded with the pick of the trade goods[67].

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[64]H.B.A., B239/a/91, York Factory Journal, June 29, 1791.

[65]Ibid., July 13, 1791.

[66]H.B.A., A11/117, London Inward Correspndence from York Factory, Letter from Joseph Colen, September 24, 1791.

[67]H.B.A., B239/a/91, York Factory Journal, July 13-24, 1791.

Although this complement of men and goods represented an improvement over the previous year for the Saskatchewan River posts, the basic problems of inadequate manpower, transportation and trade goods were still with them.

The men were still very dissatisfied with their lot. Indeed Colen claimed the situation was worse than ever because of the return of Tomison[68], but his testimony is suspect. It is true that an exceptionally large number of the inland employees had reached the end of their contracts in the summer of 1791[69]. As a result it appears possible that they were tempted to act together to improve their lot. Nevertheless, only five men retired; and, of these, only two did so because they would not come to terms[70]. Likewise there was no substantial increase in those serving without contracts. Tomison lost a few experienced men but probably gained more than he lost through engaging men who had served at Swan River or on the Nelson River the previous year.

The most serious problem was that most of the

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[68]Ibid., July 2 and 7, 1791.

[69]A total of 32 were without contract including five holdovers from previous years. H.B.A., B239/f/1, York Factory Lists of Servants.

[70]John Kirkness and James Batt returned to England for medical reasons and William Folster at his own request. Only Hugh Folster and John Strickler were sent home because they refused to come to terms. A sixth man, George Short, refused to return inland and was retained at York Fort. Ibid.

Canadian employees had served notice that they would be leaving as soon as their contracts expired. Colen implied that this also was Tomison's fault[71]. Mention has already been made of the prejudice of most of the Orkneymen and their refusal to work with the Canadians. According to the York Fort Council "This year they particularly objected against it and the reason they assigned was 'The Canadians were not from their town'."[72] William Walker made no attempt to hide his contempt for them and had actively discouraged hiring more of them while he was in command two years earlier. There is evidence that the Canadians also deeply disliked Charles Isham. Four of them had spent the previous winter at Swan River where they had been chiefly responsible for the building of two large canoes in the Canadian manner. According to Tomison, two of these men refused to serve with Isham any longer. In the fall of 1791 it was agreed that they would carry in goods for Swan River, which were to be cached at the nearest point along the route to the Saskatchewan, and then to continue on to winter along the Saskatchewan[73]. Tomison had been the man responsible for instituting the policy of trying to hire

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[71]H.B.A., A11/117, London Inward Correspondence from York Factory, Letter from Joseph Colen, September 24, 1791.

[72]Ibid., Letter from the York Factory Council, September 26, 1791.

[73]H.B.A., B121/a/7, Manchester House Journal, September 5, 1791.

Canadians. It seems scarcely credible that he was trying to drive them away. Their action in seeking his support against one of the other masters suggests they had few complaints about him.

More canoes had been made inland than in any previous year; but, it had still been necessary to leave a substantial number of furs at Cumberland House. In part this reflected a decline in the use of Indians to assist with the canoes between Cumberland House and the Bay. In 1787, Tomison had relied on at least 35 Indians, eleven of whom were employed in the Company's canoes while the rest came down in their own, carrying furs one way and goods the other[74]. In 1791, Tomison was only able to engage four Indians to help in Company canoes and seven Indian canoes, which were probably manned by two men apiece[75]. The total would therefore have been about eighteen, only half the number employed four years earlier. In part the reduction may have been deliberately achieved by Tomison to strengthen his case that more men were desperately needed. In actual fact there is no solid evidence that he did so. In any event it is clear there were not enough Euro-

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[74]H.B.A., B239/a/87, York Factory Journal, June 30-July 18, 1787.

[75]H.B.A., B121/a/6, Manchester House Journal, May 30 to June 2, 1791.

peans to man more canoes, even if they could be obtained. Tomison and Walker had brought down 24 canoes with only 62 men, while it would normally require three men per canoe, or seventy men plus the two Inland masters. Despite this, Colen complained that the canoes had been overmanned and implied that Tomison was deliberately holding back canoes in order to frustrate his Rat Country scheme[76].

With the pick of the stock of trade goods at York Fort, Tomison was now well supplied with every item of importance except for liquor and tobacco, especially the latter. While at the Bay, Tomison went through all of the rolls of tobacco which were stored there, picking out that which was tradable and throwing the rest into the river. He selected out 1,046 pounds for use inland; but this was still not a sufficient quantity[77]. In his journal he noted:

> [I] have got no more than twenty Roles made up for all the Inland Settlements which is not half enough was it good, if there is a decrease of Trade next year, your Honours will Please to Compute it to the want of good Tobacco it being one of the Principal articles Carried inland.[78]

Tomison concluded finally that the only barriers to further expansion of the inland trade were "the want of men and

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[76]H.B.A., B239/a/91, York Factory Journal, June 29, 1791.

[77]Ibid., July 12, 1791.

[78]H.B.A., B121/a/6, Manchester House Journal, July 12, 1791.

good tobacco"[79].

The trading season of 1791-92 had an inauspicious start for Tomison and his men. On July 27, only five days after leaving the Bay, one of the Indians burst the barrel of a new Wilson '89 trading gun[80]. Clearly the guns were still deficient in quality. Even more disturbing was the discovery on July 31 that the kegs were leaky and they had already lost a significant quantity of brandy[81]. At the Grand Rapids, William Walker's canoe was broken in two and the cargo lost. Worse still, one of the men, Archibald Copeland, was drowned and Walker himself was severely injured when he was caught in the tracking line and battered senseless among the rocks[82]. While at Cumberland, Tomison stayed on for a few days to supervise the beginning of construction of a new post on the point of land where the Hudson's Bay post still stands today. While there, Angus Shaw stopped for a night and Tomison learned about the continuing expansion of the Canadian trade.

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[79]H.B.A., A11/117, London Inward Correspondence from York Factory, Letter from William Tomison, July 22, 1791.

[80]H.B.A., B121/a/7, Manchester House Journal, July 27 and August 13, 1791.

[81]Ibid., July 31, 1791.

[82]Ibid., August 19, 1791. Archibald Copeland was a young hand on his second inland vorage and was described as "very steady & careful". H.B.A., B239/f/1, York Factory Lists of Servants.

According to Shaw, the North West Company had brought in eleven more canoes full of goods this year and he also indicated that proceeds from fur sales the previous year had been exceptionally good[83]. Tomison undoubtedly also heard about changes in the organization of the North West Company which were made public that summer. The twenty shares in the Company were redistributed in such a way as to more accurately reflect the active participation of the partners. Gregory, Pangman and Mackenzie each gained one further share apiece which they were required to purchase from Normand McLeod, William Holmes and George McBeath. William McGillivray became a partner for the first time, presumably in the place of Peter Pond, while Daniel Sutherland, a Montreal merchant who had formerly supplied the McKay-Shaw partnership, received a share out of the seven formerly held by the firm of McTavish, Frobisher and Company[84]. The agreement was actually not to take effect until 1792, but already Montreal was filled with rumours about the high profits being enjoyed by the Company and there was growing talk that a new company would be formed with the support of traders and merchants hitherto active in the south-west trade[85]. Peter Pangman

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[83]H.B.A., B121/a/7, Manchester House Journal, September 9, 1791.

[84]Lamb, 447-448. Wallace, *Documents*, 84-89.

[85]H.B.A., F3/1, North West Company Correspondence, Letter from John Gregory to Simon McTavish, October 24, 1791.

had returned for one more year to the Forts des Prairie, and once again Angus Shaw would be active at Lac d'Orignal or Moose Lake.

When Tomison arrived at Manchester House, he was greeted with the sad news of the death of Isaac Batt, the first servant of the Hudson's Bay Company to be killed by Indians in the York Factory. During the summer, Batt had gone hunting with his wife and children and John Thompson, the younger brother of David Thompson, in company with two Blood Indians, who according to Tomison were "Villains that came to the Canadian House which had run away with other Mens' Women"[86]. A few miles from the fort they shot Batt through the head, stripped him and his woman of all their possessions and rode off with six fine horses which had belonged to Batt. Although an isolated incident, this demonstrated to the Englishmen that they were not invulnerable to the kind of treatment that the Canadians had encountered in previous years.

For the second year in succession no men were sent to winter with the Piegan and Blood Indians. Fears for the safety of the men may have been a factor but Tomison stated that the cause was all the horses had been stolen during the summer[87]. This was not the first time that Tomison and his men had had problems with horse steal-

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[86]H.B.A., B121/a/7, Manchester House Journal, October 3, 1791.

[87]Ibid., November 30, 1791.

ing. Horses had been stolen every year since 1788[88].

The lack of horses was more than an inconvenience as the traders depended on them to bring in fresh meat and firewood, as well as to carry goods and personnel when trading with or visiting the Indians. In addition it prevented Tomison from carrying through with his intention of erecting a house further up the river to compete against Shaw's post. The shallowness of the river in the fall made transportation by canoe impractical[89].

In contrast to this poor start, Tomison enjoyed his best trading season on Pine Island. Before he left in the spring he had traded over 9,000 MB in furs[90] despite the fact that his fall and winter trade was well below normal[91]. The explanation for this turnabout can be attributed to a substantial increase in trade with the Blackfoot, Blood, Piegan and Fall Indians (see Figure 8). The total inland trade did not increase because the returns at Cumberland House were seriously re-

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[88]H.B.A., B121/a/2, Manchester House Journal, April 9, 1788; H.B.A., B121/a/3, Manchester House Journal, July 23, 1788; H.B.A., B121/a/4, Manchester House Journal, November 24, 1789 and May 16, 1790; and H.B.A., B121/a/6, Manchester House Journal, January 10, 1791.

[89]H.B.A., B121/a/7, Manchester House Journal, Letter from William Tomison to William Walker, February 22, 1792.

[90]Ibid., May 9, 1792.

[91]Ibid., Letter from William Tomison to William Walker, February 22, 1792.

duced by the activities of a small Canadian house established about three days' travel up the Saskatchewan River[92].

There is no direct evidence concerning the returns from the Canadian Forts des Prairies but it is likely that they did not increase dramatically. The level of competition for the past two years at Manchester House appears to have been somewhat subdued, if one can judge from the absence of remarks in Tomison's journals about competitive practices. It may be that Pangman was content to enjoy his superior position, built up through the lavish use of goods in earlier years, and to maximize his current profits by cutting back on his expenses. This would have been a logical decision to make if it were his intention to retire and sell his shares, as it almost certainly was. Shaw was still active at Moose Lake, however, and his impact was substantial. Tomison had in fact complained to William McGillivray, accusing Shaw of deliberately taking away customers who owed him furs for credit that he had extended to them; but he was unable to collect any compensation from either Shaw or McGillivray[93]. In fact McGillivray claimed that Shaw had not needed to

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[92]H.B.A., B121/a/7, Manchester House Journal, May 27, 1792. The precise location of this place cannot be clearly identified but it was probably in the vicinity of the lower Nipawi where the Francois-Finlay posts were located. It is sometimes referred to as Thorburn's Post. J. H. Richards, *Atlas of Saskatchewan* (Saskatoon, 1969), 9.

[93]H.B.A., F3/1, North West Company Correspondence, Letter from William McGillivray to William Tomison, June 15, 1792.

resort to sharp trading practices as the Indians had flocked to him in such numbers that he ran out of goods before spring.

Over the three preceding years, Manchester House had actually increased its trade, despite the very successful operation of Angus Shaw and competition for resources from the Northern Expedition, the Swan River post and Colen's North River scheme. The total resources assigned to Manchester House had stayed relatively constant, although there wre continuing problems with manpower and trade goods. Peter Pangman, who appears to have moderated his competitive stance, probably benefited from increased returns as well as lowered expenses. The relative positions of Tomison and Pangman is unfortunately impossible to determine with any certainty but it is likely that they did not greatly change from that which had existed in 1790. As indicated in Figure 1, the returns from York Factory did not reflect the steep decline registered by the Company as a whole in 1791. Although trade statistics do not show any major shift in the relative positions of the two Companies in the Saskatchewan district, there is evidence for some far-reaching changes in the Indian alliance structure and the geographical distribution of Indian populations.

Part 2 The fur trade and the Indians--1789-92:

Evidence for wide-ranging shifts in the physi-

cal locations of Indian populations and relationships between Indian and Indian as well as Indian and trader are found in the Manchester House journals. As discussed in the previous chapter, there were already signs by 1789 that the old alliance structure had been severely strained by the establishment of posts on the North Saskatchewan River and by the demands of the traders for large quantities of dried provisions to support their men. Also of interest was the evidence that there was a growing threat of violence against the traders and the men. This climate of tension and violence was reflected more in the tone of the language in the journals and the precautions taken by the traders, rather than in a high frequency of actual incidents. Violence, however, did occur.

Between 1789 and 1792, both the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company had reason to be concerned. In the fall of 1789, a Canadian employee by the name of Ouimet was killed at one of the Forts des Prairies[94]. Reference has already been made to the death of Isaac Batt in the summer of 1791. Batt's death probably should be viewed in the context of inter-band horse-raiding. Such raids placed the traders and their men in particular danger during the summer when they were most common and when the posts were weakly manned. As mentioned

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[94]Lamb, 443.

earlier, since 1788 there had been at least one horse-stealing incident, involving the English traders, every year. Some at least were perpetrated by Indians who had come great distances with the express purpose of stealing horses. This, for example, was the case with some Stone Indians that came from the other side of the Touchwood Hills to steal horses in January, 1791[95]. The danger was greatest when the men were away from the posts. This had been the case with the incident leading to the death of Batt. In the spring of the same year, William Tate and a small party of men "had great difficulty to save the few Horses they had with them from being stolen" while returning from the Beaver Hills with some birch bark and a few furs[96].

The possibility of violence was also high when the Indians came in to trade, especially while they were consuming the liquor given them following the trading ceremony. These drinking bouts resulted in both accidents and quarrels ending in tragedy. Examples are to be found in the journals every year[97]. Indeed such a bout was probably a contributing factor in the quarrel that led to a

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[95]H.B.A., B121/a/6, Manchester House Journals, January 10 1791.

[96]Ibid., April 12, 1792.

[97]H.B.A., B121/a/4, Manchester House Journal, October 23, 1789 and May 19, 1790. H.B.A., B121/a/6, Manchester House Journal, January 31 and February 18, 1791; H.B.A., B121/a/7, Manchester House Journal, May 6, 1792.

state of war between the Fall Indians and the Cree in the summer of 1788.

For two years the Fall Indians stayed away. When they did return they came in large numbers, shifting some of their trade to the Hudson's Bay Company. Only one tent traded at Manchester House in 1791 but in the winter of 1791-92 they came to Manchester in large numbers (see Table 6 and Figure 8). Although some seem to have been tenting or travelling by themselves, the majority came in with the Blood and Piegan Indians. Allied with these other plains Indians, they were able to travel and live in greater safety.

The alliance between the Fall Indians and the Blood and Piegan suggests that there was a certain degree of animosity between these two latter peoples and at least some of the Cree. This is corroborated by two further incidents reported in the 1791-92 journal for Manchester House. On January 28, 1792, one tent of Blood Indians stayed behind when the rest of the Fall Indians and Bloods left. Their mission was "to await the arrival of some Nahathaway (Cree) Indians to know whether they are to keep peace with them or not."[98] Unfortunately there is no direct indication of what the answer may have been at this time; but, when the Piegan came to trade in the spring,

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[98]H.B.A., B121/a/7, Manchester House Journal, January 28, 1792.

Tomison went to great pains to keep them separate from some Cree who were there at the same time[99]. The evidence seems to suggest, therefore that the Cree were in a state of hostility with the Blood, Fall and Piegan Indians.

The trading pattern of the Fall Indians is also indicative of possible shifts in the geographic distribution of that and other populations within the trading area of Pine Island. Prior to 1791, the Fall Indians, on those occasions when they came in, made only one visit in the spring of the year. They appear to have visited South Branch House and possibly the North West Company post at Battle River more frequently. This pattern suggests that they had come a long distance to trade at Pine Island and in all probability their usual hunting and tenting territories were closer to the South branch of the Saskatchewan River. In the winter of 1791-92 they came in to trade on four occasions, travelling at a time of year when long distance travel on the plains was usually restricted. This suggests that they were wintering within a few days' travel from Pine Island, possibly in the sand hills and broken country west of the elbow of the South Saskatchewan River. Indeed it is possible that the Blood and Piegan were wintering close by as well in anticipation that their enemies to the south, the Snake, might retaliate against their at-

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[99]Ibid., April 25, 1792.

tacks on them the previous winter[100].

Trading patterns also show a great increase in trade with the Blackfoot Indians. In part this might have been a direct result of the closure of the Battle River post which had undoubtedly attracted most of the Blackfoot. At this time the Blackfoot appear to have regarded the Battle River basin as their homeland. When they did start to trade at Manchester House in 1789 they were frequent customers coming in to trade throughout the trading season. The frequency of visits actually increased year by year, reaching a maximum of twelve between October 1791 and July 1792. This suggests that many of them lived fairly near Pine Island. Some may even have been staying closer than in earlier times in order to take advantage of frequent trading visits and the presents associated with them.

In this same period there appears to have been an increase in the number of Assiniboine or Stone Indians trading at Manchester House. Walker did indicate that some of the new customers were Indians who used to trade with him at South Branch House[101]. This suggests that some of the Assiniboine were continuing to move westward. Furthermore, there is some suggestion that the Swampy Ground Assiniboine had moved far enough to the west that they

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[100]H.B.A., B121/a/6, April 1, 1791.

[101]H.B.A., B121/a/4, February 27, 1790.

found it more convenient to trade at Moose Lake[102]. An examination of trading records for 1787-88 and 1791-92 reveals that in the former year, six parties of Assiniboine came in to trade and, of these, four were Swampy Ground Assiniboine and two were from the plains. In the latter year, eight parties of Assiniboine visited Manchester House and all of them appear to have been from the plains.

There is a suggestion of another significant change among the Assiniboine, and to some extent the Cree as well. In the spring of 1790, Walker complained that many of the Stone Indians brought in only provisions to trade and expected to be greeted with the full ceremony, "also the colours to be hoisted and guns to be fired."[103] He blamed this on the fact that the Canadians were giving great encouragement to Indians that brought in provisions,

> on the account they have their Partners to supply that comes from the northward which for every pound weight they receive three livres when made into pemmican, which is deducted from the others furs.[104]

The Assiniboine and the Cree appear to have responded positively to this encouragement, with the result that some of them turned most of their attention to hunting

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[102]For a discussion of the westward movement of the Swampy Ground Assiniboine at this time see Raoul Andersen, op. cit.

[103]H.B.A., B121/a/4, Manchester House Journal, April 15, 1790.

[104]Ibid.

buffalo. In 1792, Tomison complained that none of the Cree had been in to trade all winter as they were busy "all Pounding Buffalo at the Beaver Hills".[105] Most of the Assiniboine who did come in were described as "poorly gooded"[106] which implies that they were not putting much effort into fur hunting.

No other significant shifts in trading patterns can be clearly discerned. The Sarcee continued to come in regularly, usually in association with the Cree. Cree Indians, both from the woods and from the plains, remained frequent customers. Frequently, however, no tribal designation was used when local Indians came in to trade. It is likely that most of them were Cree.

The terms Southward and Nahathaway are usually used in the journals to designate the Cree and appear to have been interchangeable. There is a change through time in the frequency of use of these terms. Up until 1791 the term "Southward" was invariably used. In 1791-92 a shift was made to the use of the term Nahathaway. As it is unlikely that there would have been a complete shift of clientele in one year it is more reasonable to look for another reason. The explanation may lie in the fact that in 1791 Tomison obtained a new writer to look after his

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[105]H.B.A., B121/a/7, Manchester House Journal, Letter from William Tomison to William Walker, February 22, 1792.

[106]Ibid., December 31, 1791.

journals, James Bird[107].

In conclusion, by 1792 the alliance of trading Indians was showing definite signs of breaking into two blocs, similar in composition to those which persisted through most of the nineteenth century. On one side were the Blood, Piegan and Fall Indians. On the other side were the Cree. At this time the Sarcee seem to have been closely tied to the Cree. The Assiniboine or Stone Indians were probably more closely identified with the Cree power bloc also but to this point had not been directly involved in any recorded confrontation. Likewise the Blackfoot Indians probably had sympathy for the Blood, Piegan and Fall Indians but seem to have traded independently from them and may have been effectively neutral. The process of westward movement of most of these groups was still continuing. By 1792, as reflected in trade records, the Assiniboine and Fall Indians had both moved further west and become regular visitors to Pine Island. It is probable that a similar movement was also occurring with the Cree but this can not be discerned because sub-groups are not differentiated in the journals. With the Assiniboine,

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[107]James Bird had been hired as a writer in 1788 at the age of fifteen. After two years at York Factory he was sent inland in 1790 as writer to Charles Isham at Swan River. William Tomison annoyed both Isham and Colen when he engaged Bird to be his writer in the fall of 1791 and took him up to Manchester House. Bird subsequently had a lengthy career on the Saskatchewan River; H.B.A., B239 f/1, York Factory Lists of Servants.

however, there is differentiation and it is possible to see evidence for the continued westward migration of the Swampy Ground Assiniboine towards their eventual home in the foothill forests of western Alberta.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE LAST YEARS--1792 to 1794

In the summer of 1792, after the last canoes had left Pine Island for the Bay or Grand Portage, seven of Pangman's men went up the river to build a new post (which was later named Fort George) at the Moose Hills (see Figure 5). It is not likely that Pangman had decided to offer competition to Angus Shaw, whose rights to trade there had already been agreed to by the North West Company. Instead it is almost certain it was done by prior agreement with Shaw, who was to replace him as Bourgeois at Fort des Prairies. Peter Pangman had decided to retire, and his last act was to prepare a new headquarters for his successor. This new post would combine the advantages of Shaw's former station at Moose Lake with those of a post in the parkland, easily accessible by way of the North Saskatchewan River.

When Angus Shaw came up the Saskatchewan River in the fall he came armed with advantages that Pangman had never possessed. He did not have to face competition from the English or Beaver River traders. There were no other Canadian companies in the field, although there were

continuing rumours to the effect that some might be forming. Perhaps the most important factor was that he had strong backing from the North West Company, who, according to Roderick McKenzie, had faith that he would "reduce the H.B. interest in that quarter" and "attract their attention to such a degree that they will relinquish their English River scheme."[1] This support also included an augmentation of goods and supplies. According to Tomison, Shaw brought up 375 pieces of goods to Fort George[2], which would have been the normal lading for fifteen canoes[3]. By contrast, Pangman had only ten canoes full of goods at Pine Island the previous year[4]. In fact, the North West Company poured 32 canoes into the Saskatchewan River in the fall of 1792, which was three more than they sent to all of their northern districts[5].

When Tomison returned to York Fort in the spring of 1792, he was not in a position to make arrangements for construction of a new post in his absence. He had only

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[1]H.B.A., F3/1, North West Company Correspondence, Letter from Roderick Mckenzie to Angus Shaw, August 29, 1792.

[2]H.B.A., B24/a/1, Buckingham House Journal, Letter from William Tomison, to Malcholm Ross, March 1, 1793.

[3]Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada*, 227.

[4]H.B.A., B121/a7, Manchester House Journal, September 15 to 17, 1791.

[5]H.B.A., B49/a/25, Cumberland House Journal, September 11, 1792.

enough men to leave behind a skeleton staff at Manchester House, seven men including James Tate who was left in charge. Of these, three were invalids, two of them having been accidently shot at their own setting guns during the winter[6]. With such resources, Tate was in no position to send men up to build beside the Canadians during the summer. South Branch House was also undermanned although William Walker himself stayed there for the summer, still ailing as a result of the injuries he had received the previous autumn and so fearful that he might not recover that he plaintively requested Tomison "to pay me a vissit in case it should be the Last."[7]

Using every available man, and with the help of a large number of Indians, Tomison was able to man 24 large canoes from Cumberland House and carried down over 16,000 MB[8]. Nevertheless, a substantial quantity had to be left behind once again. About three weeks later, on July 17, 1792, Philip Turnor and Peter Fidler arrived at York Fort having returned from their northern explorations[9].

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[6]H.B.A., B121/a/7, Manchester House Journal, May 19, 1792. Set guns (or setting guns) were used to shoot wolves and other predatory animals. Bait would be set in such a way that any animal disturbing it would come under fire of one or more guns set up around it.

[7]H.B.A., B205/a/6, South Branch House Journal, Letter from William Walker to William Tomison, May 16, 1792.

[8]H.B.A., B239/b/52, York Factory Country Correspondence, Joseph Colen to William Jefferson, July 26, 1792.

[9]H.B.A., B239/a/92, York Factory Journal, July 17, 1792.

Once again, the issue of priorities had to be faced. Once again, there were three competing interests.

Apparently a decision was made not to press forward immediately with a serious effort to establish a trade opposition in the north. Both Colen and Tomison probably agreed on this and there is no indication that Turnor disagreed. After Turnor's experience in the Canadian preserve he was obviously aware that any successful action in that area would require substantially greater resources than were immediately available. Colen was able to convince Turnor that the lack of support he had received two years earlier had been the fault of William Walker and that Tomison was doing all in his power to frustrate any attempts to follow up[10]. Colen himself was not by any means blameless, but he convinced Turnor that he was and was even able to enlist him to conduct a survey up the Nelson River towards the Rat Country[11]. As a result of his survey it was decided that David Thompson would be sent up the same river with the ostensible mission of finding a more direct route to the Churchill River, thus bypassing Cumberland House[12]. A. S. Morton has suggested that Co-

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[10]H.B.A., B239/b/52, York Factory Country Correspondence, Letters between Joseph Colen and Philip Turnor, July 12 to August 6, 1792.

[11]Ibid., Letter from Joseph Colen to William Tomison, August 28, 1792.

[12]Morton, 445.

len's prime motive was still to protect his trade as Thompson was diverted to Sipiwesk Lake, a location which was off the route he was seeking to reach the Churchill via the Burntwood River[13].

Despite the fact that a number of experienced men were returning to England, Colen was satisfied with progress made on the establishment of posts to oppose the Canadians in the Rat Country. All of them had accompanied Turnor on his trip up the Nelson River, carrying a large quantity of goods up to Chatham House. By this means seven canoe-loads of goods were sent up in addition to seventy pieces carried up by Indians[14]. With this supply, it was possible to proceed with the establishment of the second post where Thompson was to winter.

Tomison again had his choice of the available goods, but he had some difficulty in coming to terms with many of the experienced men who were at the ends of their contracts. In the end he headed inland with the same number of men that had come down the river with him[15]. Malcholm Ross and most of the other men who had accompanied Turnor to the North stayed behind with instructions to

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[13]Ibid.

[14]H.B.A., B239/b/52, York Factory Country Correspondence, Joseph Colen to Thomas Staynor, September 13, 1792.

[15]H.B.A., B239/a/92, York Factory Journal, July 23 to 25, 1792.

follow (with cargos of fresh goods and four young hands[16]) after the arrival of the ship. In effect there would be a substantial increase in the number of men under Tomison's control but only a marginal increase in the number of trade goods. A total of twenty canoes, nineteen large and one small, were sent inland with goods. This compared with eighteen large canoes the year before[17]. The large canoes were much smaller than the Canadian ones as they carried less than half the cargo. On the basis of an average lading of twelve pieces per canoe, Tomison had only one-quarter of the quantity of goods available to the North West Company who had committed 32 large canoes to the same area. He was probably outmanned to a similar extent.

Matters could have been worse. The Canadian servants had not carried through their threat to leave and they returned to the upper posts in his company. Furthermore, Tomison was accompanied by Thomas Thomas[18], a trained surgeon, who was now assigned to the inland posts. This was no doubt a great relief to Tomison who had been much disturbed the previous year by two setting gun acci-

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[16]H.B.A., B239/b/52, York Factory Country Correspondence, Letter from William Tomison to Joseph Colen, August 6, 1792.

[17]H.B.A., B239/a/92, York Factory Journal, July 23 to 25 and September 1, 1792.

[18]Thomas Thomas was from the parish of St. Andrew's in Holborn and had come out to York Factory as a surgeon in 1789 at the age of 23. His appointment inland in 1792 was probably mainly in response to the illness of William Walker. H.B.A., B239/f/1, York Factory Lists of Servants.

dents at Manchester House and the declining health of William Walker.

The presence of a surgeon was not any insurance against fatal accident or disease. On the voyage inland, an experienced hand by the name of William Allen was drowned at the Grand Rapid, the second fatal accident there in as many years[19]. When they got to the site of the former Hudson House Tomison received word of the sudden death of James Oman[20] at South Branch House during the summer and the deteriorating condition of William Walker[21]. Thomas was sent across to do what he could while Tomison hurried on up the river. Walker lasted about another two weeks, dying on the morning of October 13[22]. When Tomison arrived at Manchester, he found that young Nichol Allen, one of the two who had been injured by a setting gun, had

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[19]H.B.A., B24/a/1, Buckingham House Journal, August 23, 1792. William Allen was from Sandwick in Orkney and had worked inland since 1786. Most of the time he had been at Manchester House. In 1792 he was listed as a steersman, 32 years old. H.B.A., B239/f/1, York Factory Lists of Servants.

[20]James Oman had been one of the more experienced men inland. Hailing from the parish of Walls in Orkney, he had joined the Company in 1781 at the age of 20. He had gone home in 1789, returning the following year with a contract to serve another five years. He fell violently ill on July 26, 1792 and after three days in a delirious state he died. H.B.A., B239/f/1, York Factory Lists of Servants; and H.B.A., B205/a/7, South Branch House Journal, July 26 to 29, 1792.

[21]H.B.A., B24/a/1, Buckingham House Journal, September 26, 1792.

[22]H.B.A., B205/a/7, South Branch House Journal, October 13, 1792.

been drowned in the river trying to cross on horseback[23]. It was a tragic beginning to what Tomison had hoped would be his last year in the country.

Undaunted by these events or by the overwhelming competitive superiority of the Canadians, Tomison stopped only briefly at Pine Island before pressing on up the river with the majority of his men to establish his new headquarters at the Moose Hills adjacent to Fort George[24]. His new post, which he called Buckingham House, would take over from Manchester House the distinction of being in the van of the fur trade expansion up the North Saskatchewan River. The latter settlement was to be relegated to the role of being a relatively minor post, catering to trade with the Indians of a relatively restricted region. This was presumably true also of the Pine Island post operated by the North West Company.

James Tate, who had acted as summer master at Manchester House on several occasions, finally succeeded to a command of his own as master for the winter of 1792-

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[23]Nicholas Allen Jr. was a young man from South Ronaldsay who had joined the Company two years earlier at the age of 22. He had accompanied Tomison inland shortly after disembarking at the Bay. It seems possible that he or his family had some close personal tie with William Tomison who came from the same island. In referring to him, Tomison usually used the terms Nick or Nichol which are more familiar forms of his name. H.B.A., B239/f/1, York Factory Lists of Servants.

[24]H.B.A., B24/a/1, Buckingham House Journal, October 7, 1792.

93[25]. His complement was set at about fourteen, although it was higher for part of the winter as some men (notably Thomas Thomas and James Bird) were sent down from Buckingham House because there were no suitable accommodations at the new post. There is no indication in Tate's journal as to who was in charge of the North West Company post, although it was probably James Finlay[26], a new wintering partner of the Company. Presumably their post was much better manned and supplied than Manchester House.

The changing trade patterns revealed in the Manchester House Journals reflect the changed situation (see Table 6). For the first time since Manchester House was established, the Piegan and Blood Indians did not come in to trade, with the exception of one tent of Bloods who came in about the same time as the Fall Indians. The Sarcee also ceased to trade there as did many of the Cree. As pointed out in the last chapter, the Swampy Ground Assiniboine had already stopped coming. All of these Indians were living far to the west of Manchester House and Pine Island and were doubtless now trading at Buckingham House and Fort George. The majority of Indians trading at Man-

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[25]H.B.A., B121/a/8, Manchester House Journals, 1792-93.

[26]James Finlay was the son of the pioneer trader of the same name who had been a partner of John Gregory from 1773 until 1783. After serving as an apprentice clerk for Gregory and McLeod for two years, he became a clerk for the North West Company in 1787. In 1792 he was made a wintering partner of the Company and placed in charge of Fort de L'Isle, one of the names used for the Company's post on Pine Island. Wallace, *Documents*, 440.

Figure 9: DISTRIBUTION OF INDIAN POPULATIONS ca. 1794

chester House were from the Cree, Assiniboine, Blackfoot and Fall peoples. All of these Indians traded in small parties in fairly frequent intervals which suggests that they were wintering within a few days' travel from Pine Island. It seems likely that the makeup of the trade at the North West Company post was very similar.

It was a quiet winter at Pine Island, if one can judge from the journal kept by James Tate. The trading returns were not recorded at Manchester House but it is likely they were modest. In the spring, Tomison appears to have decided that the post should be closed down for the Summer, and he ordered all remaining trade goods and stores to be carried up to Buckingham House[27]. This was done, using the boat to transport them, and on May 17, the post was abandoned[28]. There is no evidence concerning whether or not the North West Company post on Pine Island remained open or not.

Tomison returned to the Bay determined to stay on for at least another year. With Walker now dead there was no logical successor, at least not one that Tomison could support. The only course of action was to remain until the Governor and Committee could decide who should replace him. Unfortunately Tomison's thoughts or recom-

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[27]H.B.A., B24/a/1, Buckingham House Journal, April 26, 1793.

[28]Ibid., May 17, 1793.

mendations can never be known with any certainty as the correspondence from York Factory to London from 1792 to 1794 has not survived.

In Tomison's absence inland, Joseph Colen had instituted two changes which were to be very beneficial to the inland trade. In order to break the transportation bottleneck which had developed in the Cumberland House-York Fort sector he had sent a stock of goods inland by boat as far as the Rock in-Hill River. Here the goods could be transshipped into canoes in exchange for furs. Using this shuttle system it would be possible for both the canoes and the boats to make two round trips in a season increasing the payload which could be carried and reducing the number of canoes required. This innovation was endorsed by Tomison and made permanent with the establishment of Gordon House at that location[29]. The second change was one that Tomison had been awaiting many years. In 1791, the Company had shipped out equipment and supplies to set up a distillery and brewery at York Fort. This year, for the first time, much of the brandy sent inland was double-distilled. This action increased substantially the amount of alcohol that could be carried. Tomison was as excited as a child with a new toy. According to Colen,

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[29]Alice M. Johnson, editor, *Saskatchewan Journals and Correspondence* (London, 1967), xviii.

> he declared it was the greatest stroke ever struck for the benefit of inland

and, Colen continued,

> he returned this year fully determined to be revenged on the Canadians as he termed it "for the tricks they have played him years past".[30]

When Tomison returned inland, his supply of goods was substantially greater than in previous years. Nevertheless, there was no corresponding increase in manpower. The Canadian employees had left during the winter, succuming to the blandishments of Angus Shaw at Fort George. With those who had died during the previous year, he was short six men before he arrived at the Bay. Another eight returned home, for various reasons, although not all of these had been employed on the Saskatchewan River. In the end he was not able to replace all of them and had to return inland with fewer men than he had the previous year[31]. (See Table 2.)

The North West Company returned to the Saskat-

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[30]H.B.A., B239/a/95, York Factory Journal, July 20, 1793.

[31]One of the problems was the shortage of fit young men to replace experienced men who were leaving. York Factory had again suffered a serious outbreak of scurvy during the preceding winter because of a shortage of country provisions. H.B.A., B24/a/1, Buckingham House Journal, Letter from Joseph Colen to William Tomison, June 14, 1793.

Although the quantity of goods sent inland was greater than in previous years, some were earmarked for the proposed Athabasca expedition in which Malcholm Ross was to be the leader from Cumberland House in the summer of 1794. H.B.A., B239/b/54, York Factory Country Correspondence, Letter from Joseph Colen to William Tomison, August 29, 1793.

chewan with the same number of canoes as the year before. Their resources would have to be spread more thinly, however, as this summer saw the arrival of opposition traders from Canada. David and Peter Grant with the support of Robertson of Montreal had formed an opposition and had come out to establish posts in the Red River and Saskatchewan districts[32]. While their means were limited their presence was a major cause of annoyance to the North West Company as the market for furs was weak[33]. Consequently the competition promised to be intense.

When Tomison arrived inland he heard of the outbreak of war between the Fall Indians and the Assiniboine and Cree Indians. Apparently a band of Assiniboine or Cree had fallen upon an encampment of Fall Indians, some of whom they "barbarously murdered"[34]. In consequence, many of the Cree and Assiniboine had fled into the woods in fear of expected retaliation by the Fall Indians and their allies. South Branch House was in an exposed position and it was necessary to maintain a large complement of men there. When David Grant arrived to establish

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[32]H.B.A., F3/1, North West Company Correspondence, Letter from William Grant to Simon McTavish, January 5, 1793.

[33]Ibid., Letter from John Gregory to Simon McTavish, March 16, 1793; and Letter from James Hallowell to Simon McTavish, April 15, 1793.

[34]H.B.A., B205/a/8, South Branch House Journal, March 14, 1794. See also in the same source a Letter from James Bird to William Tomison, October 26, 1793 and a Letter from William Tomison to James Bird, October 25, 1793.

his post at the Sturgeon River, near Present day Prince Albert, James Bird, master at South Branch House, was not able to send anyone to oppose him[35]. Even vigorous opposition from John MacDonald of Garth on behalf of the North West Company was not able to prevent Grant from making inroads[36].

Grant had brought in Iroquois hunters, on whose loyalty he could depend, to hunt furs for him. This is the first recorded use of Iroquois or other eastern Indians as contracted fur trappers hired to hunt out areas in the North West. It was to become a common practice later, especially during the struggle between the North West Company and the XY Company and in the Oregon Territory after 1821. It introduced another element of instability into the Indian alliance structure as the Iroquois were competing for the fur resources of an area already fully exploited by other Indians with recognized territorial rights and trading loyalties.

Tomison continued up the river. When he arrived opposite Pine Island he found that the Canadians intended to keep their post open. Tomison was not happy at this as it would thin out his resources. He felt, however, that he

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[35]Ibid., Letter from James Bird To William Tomison, October 26, 1793.

[36]H.B.A., F3/1, North West Company Correspondence, John MacDonald to Simon McTavish, July 24, 1794.

had no choice but to follow suit. He therefore stopped for a few days while the post was made habitable and secure. Once this was accomplished, he left the cargo of three canoes under the care of seven men and proceeded on up to Buckingham House. A few days after arriving there he sent down five more men with horses loaded with stores and goods necessary to make Manchester House fully functional again[37]. He was by now quite nervous about the Indian situation as conflict had broken out between the Cree and the Blackfoot at Buckingham House shortly before his arrival there[38].

Before the reinforcements could reach Manchester House, a large band of Fall and Blackfoot Indians came in to trade. Taking advantage of the unpreparedness of the Englishmen, they robbed them and Manchester House of all they desired. The hostilities seem to have started when the Indians entered the North West Company post[39]. Several days earlier they had killed a Blackfoot interpreter by

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[37]H.B.A., B205/a/8, South Branch House Journal, Letter from William Tomison to James Bird, October 25, 1793.

[38]H.B.A., B24/a/2, Buckingham House Journal, October 12, 1793.

[39]Ibid., October 22, 1793. Other accounts of the attack are contained in the following: H.B.A., B205/a/8, South Branch House Journal, Letter from William Tomison to James Bird, October 25, 1793; H.B.A., F3/1, North West Company Correspondence, Letter from John MacDonald to Simon McTavish, July 24, 1794; Letter from Angus Shaw to Simon McTavish, July 25, 1794; and Letter from Duncan McGillivray to Simon McTavish, July 26, 1794; and P.A.C., MG 19 A17, Autobiographical Notes of John MacDonald of Garth, John MacDonald to Dean de Belfeuille McDonald, March 3, 1859.

the name of Menard[40] who had been out on the plains alone looking for some of his horses. Apparently they began to boast of this deed while in the post which led to a general mêlée. The Indians fled from the post, taking with them a number of horses, as well as some of the women and goods belonging to the men. Turning upon Manchester House, they pillaged it as well, stripping the men and destroying those goods and supplies they did not take. They made no attempt however to physically assault any of the men. By this time the Canadians had regrouped, and began to fire upon them. The Indians suffered the loss of several dead or wounded, and fled from the island.

The losses suffered by the Hudson's Bay Company were not as severe as they might have been. The party sent overland was not intercepted and were able to return to Buckingham House with their goods intact. All of the men had excaped death or injury. The attack had been hurried and some of the goods had been missed, so that the actual loss was only about two and one-half canoe loads of goods[41]. Nevertheless, no attempt was made to re-occupy Manchester House for the remainder of the winter. The

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[40]As an interpreter, Menard must have been an experienced employee of the Canadian company. Accordingly it is possible that it might have been the same man as the Louis Meinard who wintered with Forrest Oakes in 1767. Innis, 211.

[41]H.B.A., B24/a/2, Buckingham House Journal, February 5, 1794.

bloodshed which had erupted between the Indians and the Canadians made it a very unhealthy place for a small body of men.

The uncertain mood of the Indians was confirmed in January, 1794 at both Buckingham House and Pine Island. A large body of Blackfoot Indians which came to trade at Buckingham House and Fort George had with them goods stolen from Manchester House. They were unruly and unrepentent and after leaving the posts caught a small party of men from Fort George which included the young Duncan McGillivray[42]. They were stripped of their clothes and belongings and would have perished had they not been close to their fort[43]. An even more dangerous encounter occurred at Pine Island about the same time. The Fall Indians returned in force in company with the Blackfoot Indians and brought in a large trade. They threatened to sack the North West Company post but, deterred by the presence there of fifty armed men, they contented themselves with stealing all of their horses including some they had

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[42]Duncan McGillivray was a nephew of Simon McTavish who, like his brothers William and Simon, was brought in to the North West Company by his uncle. Duncan's first year in the northwest was in 1793-94 when he stayed at Fort George and on Pine Island. His experiences during this year are fully described in a letter he wrote to his uncle in the summer of 1794. H.B.A., F3/1, North West Company Correspondence, Duncan McGillivray to Simon McTavish, July 26, 1794.

[43]Ibid., Letter from Angus Shaw to Simon McTavish, July 25, 1794; and Letter from Duncan McGillivray to Simon McTavish, July 26, 1794.

just finished trading to the Canadians[44]. They threatened to return again in the spring to destroy the post. Finlay and his men considered abandoning the island but instead requested reinforcements from Fort George which were subsequently sent down[45].

The remainder of the winter and the spring passed by without further incident, but when the canoes left in the spring Pine Island was abandoned permanently. Never again was it re-occupied as a centre of the fur trade.

Conclusions:

During the period from 1786 to 1794 the traders on Pine Island had seen substantial changes in the fur trading situation in the Saskatchewan valley. Some of these changes were obvious at the time. Others were more subtle; their significance was not clear at the time.

The Hudson's Bay Company under the local leadership of William Tomison had placed a high priority on the expansion of their trade in the Saskatchewan district. A significant expansion had occurred, but to their dismay, the North West Company achieved even greater progress. A number of factors which contributed towards this result have been discussed.

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[44]H.B.A., B24/a/2, Buckingham House Journal, February 5, 1794.

[45]H.B.A., F3/1, North West Company Correspondence, Duncan McGillivray to Simon McTavish, July 26, 1794.

After 1789, there was a growing conflict between the requirements of the Saskatchewan district and the Company's desire to expand into the English River and Athabasca trading preserves of the North West Company. Joseph Colen's ambitions in the Rat Country north of the Nelson River added a third competing interest. Despite substantial increases in the number of men and goods supplied to York Factory, all three inland projects were inadequately supported.

The strategy adopted by the North West Company made it virtually impossible for either Tomison or Colen to give enthusiastic support to the Athabasca project. Competition between the North West Company and the Gregory-McLeod partnership had been very costly to both. For several years after their amalgamation in 1787 the new North West Company appears to have followed a policy of retrenchment in order to establish business on a profitable basis. By 1792 this had been achieved. Already they had succesfully expanded into the Rat Country and thus applied pressure on York Fort. Now, facing the prospect that the Hudson's Bay Company might attempt a full fledged trading expedition into the English River and Athabasca territories, they stepped up their competitive pressure on the Company in the Saskatchewan valley. With their preponderant advantage in goods and manpower they probably cut down the percentage of the trade received by the Hudson's Bay Company in the area, consolidating their position as the

dominant trading power on the river. The Hudson's Bay Company was hard pressed to maintain the level of trade they had achieved. Expansion into new areas was impractical without a much greater investment of men and goods.

The quarrel between Colen and Tomison tended to mask the fact that they were united in opposing a major effort in the Athabasca country. The competition between them for resources, while damaging in terms of their personal relations, did not seriously impair the Company's interests in either the Saskatchewan valley or the Rat Country, although they faced temporary losses in both. This was true mainly because both men were stubborn and resourceful and kept pushing despite disappointments and disadvantages. It is interesting to speculate on the different course of events that might have occurred if York Factory had been placed under the command of a Governor who had control over the entire operation of the Factory. This was not the case, however, and in the absence of such an appointment by the Company, the divided leadership was not the most important factor limiting expansion of the Company's trade.

A great deal of evidence has been advanced to support Glover's conclusion that a shortage of manpower was the most critical limiting factor. Without men it was not possible to man more canoes. Without more canoes they could not transport larger quantities of goods in to the posts along the inland waterways. Without more goods they

were unable to expand their trade. Both men and goods were required in greater numbers in order to take full advantage of trading opportunities and to keep up with the more lavishly equipped Canadian traders. Between 1786 and 1793, the number of men employed on the Saskatchewan River increased from 62 to 70, an increment of little more than 10%. (See Table 2.) At the same time the total number of Canadians on the River probably increased from about 180 in 1786 to at least 240 in 1793, an increase of about one-third[46].

Failure to keep up with the Canadian expansion of manpower resulted from a number of factors. The Orkney Islands, which served as the principal source for labouring employees, constituted a labour pool of limited size. There was considerable unrest among the experienced inland servants which had led to concerted attempts to gain better terms. When these failed, disaffection was manifested by low morale and an increased rate of early retirement. Inadequacies in the recruiting system had led to unhappiness and the hiring of large numbers of men who were unfit or otherwise unsuitable for inland service. In

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[46]The figure of 180 men in 1786 is based on H.B.A., A11/116, London Inward Correspondence from York Factory, Letter from William Tomison, August 24, 1786. The figure of 240 is an estimate based on the total number of canoes that went up the Saskatchewan, 32, at an average of six men per canoe, plus an average of ten men left inland at each of four posts, plus at least twelve men in the employ of David Grant.

some years there had been a high rate of attrition due to accident and disease.

Efforts to combat these problems were only partially successful. Attempts to expand the available labour pool by hiring Canadian or English servants were not a great success. This is partially explained by the low level of wages in comparison with those nominally available in London or with the North West Company. The clannish behaviour of the Orkney servants made life difficult for outsiders and tended to drive out those few who did engage with the Company. By establishing a standard wage scale for inland servants, the Company all but eliminated the problem of differentials between men of similar experience. However, by setting the scale at a level lower than the men had come to expect, incentives were reduced and morale suffered. This tendency was reinforced by actions taken to discourage private trade by the men. The recruiting system was overhauled but there is little evidence concerning the impact. After 1792, a surgeon was assigned to the inland posts. This appointment probably had its greatest value in improving morale. Perhaps the most important steps were taken in 1793, when a start was made on the reorganization of the transportation system. This pointed towards the possibility of making more effective use of available manpower. Such action was very timely as the concurrent outbreak of war in Europe was to lead to the drying up of the Orkney labour pool.

Despite the disadvantageous position they occupied with respect to manpower and quantities of trade goods, Tomison and his men were able to appropriate a large proportion of the trade on the Saskatchewan River. The reasons for this success probably lay in the day-by-day operations of the fur trade posts in the area. Yet here, the Hudson's Bay traders suffered from disadvantages other than the shortages already mentioned. The expansion of trade depended in large measure on one's generosity in the giving of presents and in staging the trade ceremony. Shortages of goods, especially liquor and tobacco, were a major problem at Manchester House. Even more damaging was the poor quality of the tobacco, and to a lesser extent some of the other goods as well. The institution of new accounting procedures in 1789 further hampered the traders' freedom in making gifts as they had less overplus to draw upon.

The Canadian traders also gained some advantage through their greater need for provisions. With at least three times as many mouths to feed as well as the needs of their northern brigades they appear to have been able to capture much of the trade of some of the Plains bands which had large quantities of meat to sell. Evidence has been presented to show that some of the bands of Cree and Assiniboine were encouraged to concentrate on bringing in provisions. This economic role probably accentuated other factors causing them to opt for a plains-oriented way of

life. The Hudson's Bay Company which had limited requirements for victuals, frequently found itself in the position of having to turn away Indians who wished to trade them. It is likely that many of them subsequently took their furs to the same place that they were able to sell their meat.

When one considers all of the disadvantages faced by Tomison and his colleagues on the Saskatchewan River, the difficult thing to understand is why they were able to do so well. The answer probably lies mainly in the essential stability of the trading relationship which developed between the Indian and the trader. The heat aroused whenever a rival trader was successful in debauching one of Tomison's Indians suggests that it was actually an uncommon occurrence. The continuing practice of trusting Indians with large amounts of debt would have been a disastrous practice if there had not been a high degree of stability. This tendency for trading loyalties to remain constant, despite differences in generosity, and possibly in trading standard as well, fits well with Polanyi's model of an Administered Trade system. Trading alliances were based on more than purely economic considerations and could be and were strengthened by personal liaisons between traders and Indian families.

There is some reason to believe that the personal factor in these trading alliances was very important. When Walker took over from Tomison at Manchester

House, some of the new customers he obtained were actually old customers to him, having traded before at South Branch House. Many of the Blackfoot and Fall Indians who started to trade at Manchester House after 1788 had probably been customers of William Holmes at Battle River. When he retired from the trade they were free to transfer their loyalty to either Pangman or Tomison and it is clear that a significant number made the latter choice. It is possible that Tomison's ability to expand his trade despite his disadvantages was due in part to the retirement of his principal opponents, Umphreville, Holmes and finally Pangman, with the result that some Indians were freed from their former loyalties and chose to tie themselves to Tomison. His longevity was an advantage in the trade.

The other main source for increased trade was probably through contact with Indians who had formerly not traded directly with any European traders. Manchester House, as the furthest upstream post for the Hudson's Bay Company, gained a substantial amount of trade in its first years in this way. Much of this came from the Blood and Piegan Indians whose trade peaked in 1791-92, the year preceding the establishment of Buckingham House and Fort George. The Hudson's Bay Company had been the first to open trade with these Indians and, although the Canadian traders made some inroads, Tomison was able to retain the loyalty of most of them. Trade with the Sarcee also appears to have increased after the establishment of Man-

chester House and this was probably due to the fact that they were now becoming regular customers for the first time.

With the establishment of Buckingham House in 1792 and Edmonton House in 1795, the Hudson's Bay Company did not achieve the same expansion of trade. This failure probably reflects the fact that from the time that they opened Manchester House they had contacted most of the Indians within easy reach of the Saskatchewan valley. Subsequent moves up the river did not bring in appreciable numbers of new customers.

Increasingly after 1790 there is reason to believe that the traditional nature of the trading alliances and relationships was changing. The expansion of the fur trade westward along the parkland zone had a substantial impact on the Indian peoples already living in the area. Reference has been made to the increasing competition for the resources of the area as the Cree and Assiniboine continued to flood into it. Some of them lost their former roles as middlemen in the fur trade and as they sought a new economic niche they came into conflict with other Indian peoples. A serious explosion could perhaps be avoided as long as the Indians who were being displaced could in turn move into new territories which were under-exploited. This opportunity was beginning to fade by 1790. The Piegan had reached the foothills of the Rocky Mountains and were beginning to come into close con-

tact with bands of equestrian Indians from the upper part of the Missouri River. The Cree and Assiniboine had reached the limits of the parkland and mixed forests to the northwest of the Saskatchewan valley and further expansion was barred by Athabaskan Indians who now had direct access to trading posts along the Athabasca and Peace Rivers.

Evidence has been presented to demonstrate that the Cree, Assiniboine and Sarcee were beginning to have violent confrontations with the Fall, Blackfoot and Blood Indians. Some of these incidents occurred at trading posts, and it is possible that excessive use of liquor by the traders was a factor. Other indidents may have had their roots in the desire of the Cree and Assiniboine for more horses, and the growing incidence of horse raids. At base however was probably the growing competition for space and resources. Increasingly, the Piegan, Blood, Blackfoot and Fall Indians were cooperating with each other. They began to travel together when coming in to trade. They banded together for othef purposes as well. In 1794 a mixed body of Fall and Blackfoot Indians was responsible for the attacks on the Pine Island posts.

The traditional alliance structure which united all of the trading Indians had broken down. Now the trading alliance between the Indians and the traders was gravely threatened. The success of the attacks on Pine Island was a direct contradiction of the alliance which was in-

tended to assure peaceful conditions under which trade could take place. Now notice was served that traders in territory occupied by the Cree and Assiniboine could not assume that Indians at war with the local Indians would abide by former peaceful understandings. This point was driven home tragically in the summer of 1794 with the destruction of South Branch House and massacre of its inhabitants by the same Indians that had plundered Manchester House. Despite the breakdown in the umbrella-like trading alliance, trading did continue. The concept of trade outside of political alliance was apparently not entirely foreign to the Indians of the western plains. Outside of such an alliance, however, trade was a much more dangerous undertaking. The days when the European trader could move freely among the Indians of the prairie west without danger were now at an end.

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P.A.C. Public Archives of Canada

I. Primary Sources:

A. Unpublished Documents

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A. Series: Headquarter Records

A1/46	Minutes of Governor and Committee, 1783-88.
A1/47	Minutes of Governor and Committee, 1792-99.
A5/2	London Letters Outward, 1776-88.
A5/3	London Letters Outward, 1788-96.
A6/13	London Correspondence Outwards, 1781-86.
A6/14	London Correspondence Outward, 1787-91.
A6/15	London Correspondence Outward, 1792-95.
A11/116	London Inward Correspondence from York Factory, 1782-1787.
A11/117	London Inward Correspondence from York Factory, 1787-97.
A14/12	Grand Ledgers, 1769-91.
A14/13	Grand Ledgers, 1791-1809.
A15/13	Grand Journals, 1786-88.
A15/14	Grand Journals, 1788-89.
A15/15	Grand Journals, 1789-1801.
A16/33	Officers and Servants Ledger, York Factory, 1781-93.
A18/1	Annual Balance Sheets, 1746-1784
A18/2	Annual Balance Sheets, 1785-1808.
A32/1	Servants Contracts, 1780-82.
A32/2	" " 1783-86.
A32/3	" " 1776-91.
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A32/5	" " 1792-93.
A32/6	" " 1793-94.
A35/1A	Officers and Servants Wills, 1763-1863.

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B24/a/1	Buckingham House Journal, 1792-93.
B24/a/2	Buckingham House Journal, 1793-94.
B49/a/16	Cumberland House Journal, 1785-86.
B49/a/17	Cumberland House Journal, 1786-87.
B49/a/18	Journal of Malcolm Ross, 1786-87.
B49/a/19	Cumberland House Journal, 1787-88.
B49/a/20	" " " 1788-89.
B49/a/21	" " " 1789-90.
B49/a/22	" " " 1790-91.
B49/a/23	" " " 1791-92.
B49/a/24	" " " 1792-93.
B49/a/25	" " " 1793-94.
B87/a/8	Hudson House Journal, 1785-86.
B87/a/9	" " " 1786-87.
B121/a/1	Manchester House Journal, 1786-87.
B121/a/2	" " " 1787-88.
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B205/a/7	" " " " 1792-93.
B205/a/8	" " " " 1793-94.
B239/a/86	York Factory Journal, 1785-86.
B239/a/87	" " " 1786-87.
B239/a/88	" " " 1787-88.
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B239/b/46	York Factory Country Correspondence, 1786-87.
B239/b/47	" " " " 1787-88.
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